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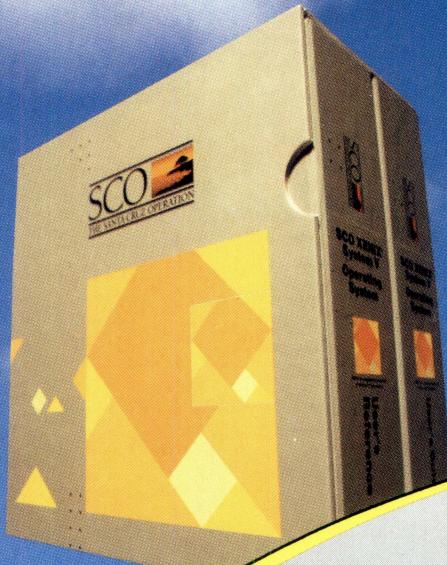
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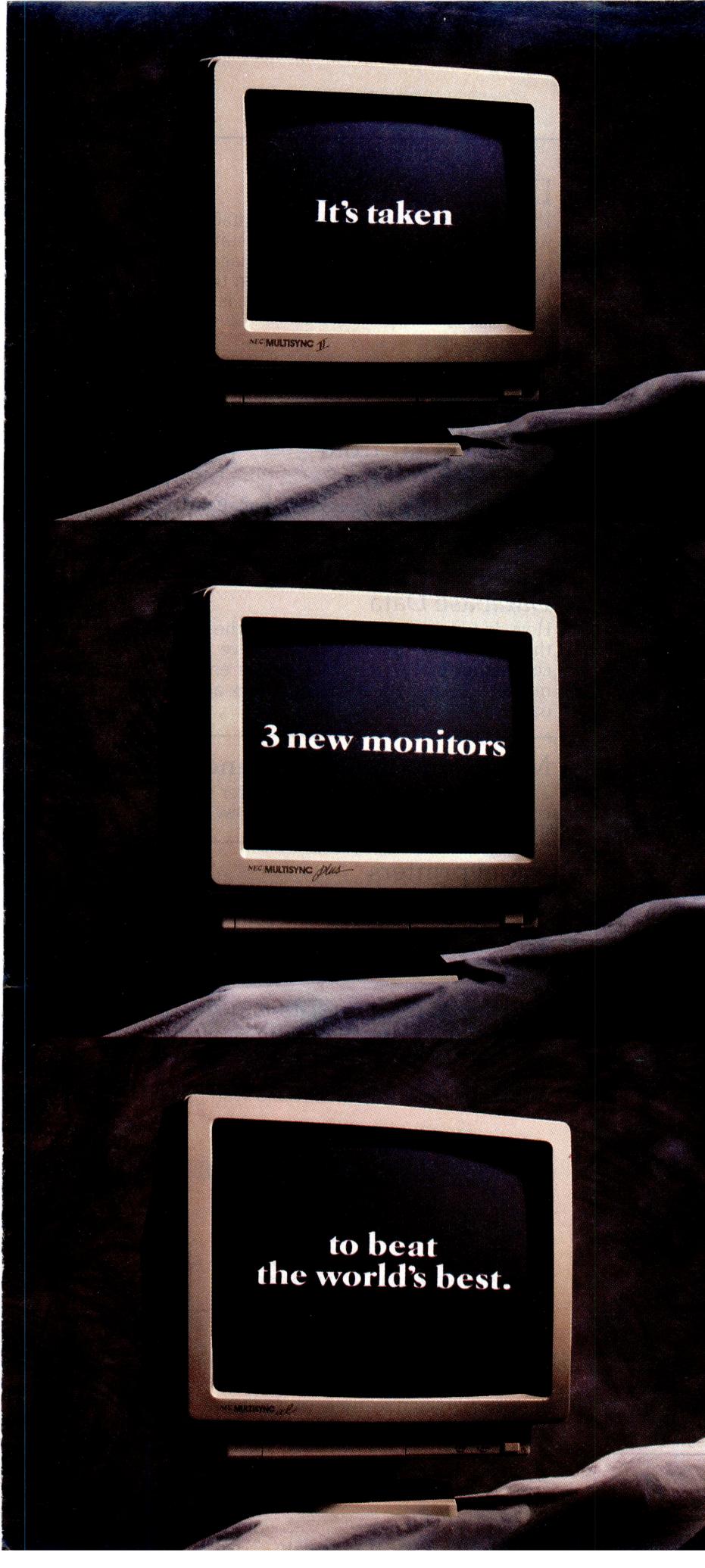
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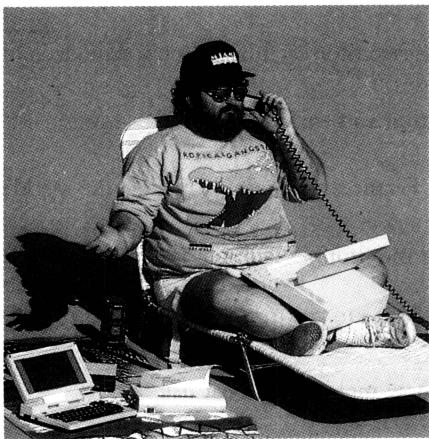
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Helmut Mueller

Peripatetic Phil Tripp (see his article on page 16) is shown in his portable office at Boat Harbour Park, Kurnell, NSW.

Office Services

Allison Tait

Bulletin Board

(02) 669 1385

Subscription Enquiries

(02) 693 6666

Advertising Sales

National Advertising Manager:

Susan Earles

NSW Representative:

David Mitchell 180 Bourke Rd, Alexandria 2015.

Tel: (02) 693 6666, Tlx: AA74488

Fax: (02) 693 2842

Advertising Production

Patrice Wohlnick

OFFICES

Editorial:

180 Bourke Rd, Alexandria 2015.

Tel: (02) 693 6666, Tlx: AA74488

Fax: (02) 693 2842

Victoria

Virginia Salmon.

221A Bay St, Pt Melbourne 3207.

Tel: (03) 646 3111,

Fax: (03) 646 5494

Editor
Jake Kennedy
Features Editor
Robert Thirlwell
Production Editor
Allecia Khartu
Bulletin Board Sysop
Jake Kennedy
Art Director
Pamela Horsnell
Production
Kylie Prats
Consulting Editor
Matt Whelan
Managing Editor
Brad Boxall
Publisher
Michael Hannan

Western Australia

Des McDonald,
48 Cliveden St, North Perth 6006.
Tel: (09) 444 4426, Fax: (09) 381
3115

Queensland

Mark Lewis
180 Bourke Rd, Alexandria 2015.
Tel: (02) 693 6666, Tlx: AA74488

South Australia

Michael Mullins
98 Jervois Street, Torrensville 5031.
Tel: (08) 352 7937

New Zealand

Scott White
Rugby Press
3rd Floor, Communications House,
Parnell, Auckland.
Tel: (09) 796 648, Tlx: NZ 63112
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NEXT MONTH INCLUDES

Steve Keen will move upmarket with his Database Data series and review four of the more powerful (and more expensive) packages. We'll also include a survey of the 50-odd database management systems available in Australia. And, if you want to present your data with some *finesse*, don't miss the Tim Hartnell/Matt Whelan feature on ByLine, First Publisher, and GEM Desktop Publisher.

Want your data to look more impressive onscreen? Or, if you're thinking of replacing that old eye strainer, we've found four new monitors that are worth looking at! And if you want to take that data with you, Ian Roberts puts the new Zenith and Hewlett-Packard portables through their paces (just like we promised last month!).

Database Data

That electronic filing cabinet, the database, has to meet your storage needs. The problems start to arise *before* you even purchase a database management system – there are more than 50 available on the Australian market: which suits your needs? Or, is everyone waiting for dBase IV?

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No one's far from anyone anymore

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Database Data

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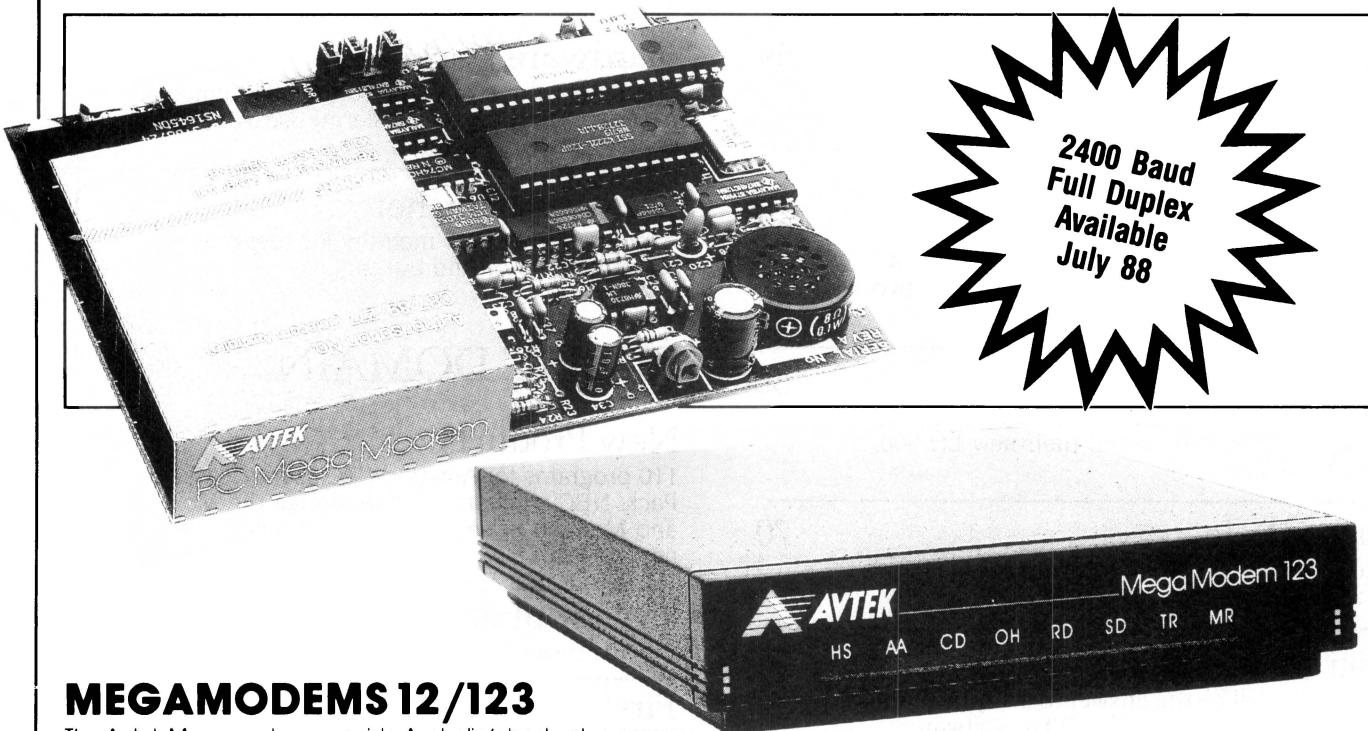
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Happy Birthday!

WELCOME to the 84th issue of *Your Computer* magazine! What's so special about 84? Well, if you divide it by 12, you get seven, which means we've racked up another birthday.

What does a seventh birthday mean to us? Someone in the office just volunteered it means we can all go home, having served our sentence for breaking that mirror . . . but they were only joking. I think.

No, a seventh birthday is significant in an industry where many don't reach their first. And those who go 'way back' with us will realise we're even older than that. For starters, we missed two issues in those hectic early days, not to mention the six months of planning and preparation that went into our launch issue.

We've been observing the micro industry for a long time, and a seventh birthday is excuse enough for a little reminiscing. What has changed in that time? And what hasn't . . .

The hardware has changed, certainly. Our early reviews were of such powerhouses as the Sinclair ZX80, with its 1 kilobyte of memory (quite surprising what it managed in that, too), and the 'big' Dick Smith System 80, which came with a whopping 16 Kbytes compared to the 4 Kbytes of the Tandy it was cloning.

Things really advanced when we installed our editorial department's Apple II, which we upgraded to a massive 64 Kbytes, and even got into the lightning fast world of 300 baud communications.

In 1982 we bought our first CompuPro, and what we could fit on its monstrous 1.2 megabyte floppies was beyond belief. Fast, too! When the 20 Mbyte hard disk arrived the following year, we were in paradise.

These days I have 40 Mbytes in my 80386-based laptop, which I carry around the world for my seminars, and I'm always squeezed for space – I knew I should have bought the 100 Mbyte version. And the two Mbytes of main memory isn't nearly enough, is it? I have a further two megs on the way.

Yes, the software has changed too. You want to try WordStar version 0.96? I still have one of those around somewhere. Of course, its printer control is not quite as sophisticated as my current laser-wise version, and I only use that for jobs that are too simple to feed to PageMaker 3.0. I've been playing with Excel lately, and I can't seem to find too many similarities between it and the VisiCalc I used to run on the Apple. The software really has changed, and it's not finished yet.

The industry is the one thing that hasn't changed a lot. Oh, sure, companies have come and gone, little companies have become huge (we remember Jodee Rich's two-man startup, Imagineering, when it was hiding from the world in the Sydney suburb of Edgecliff), people have moved around, and so on. But what is still the same is the industry's mental age. It hasn't really grown up, yet, and I'm starting to wonder if it ever will.

Can you think of any other industry where products are announced a year before they're ready, and shipped before they're ready as well. Who tests software, anyway? The customers, it seems, are the test team. They get to pay for the privilege of finding the bugs, and then get to pay for the upgrade to a version that works 'as advertised'.

When a car comes off the production line with a defect, you take it back to the dealer and say 'fix it'. There's no question of you waiting for the release of the 'bug-free' next model, and then paying to update to it. And, apart from the general incompetence of some service departments, there's usually an immediate, cost-free repair.

In many ways, we were better off in the early days. At least then, as part of a 'pioneer' industry, we knew we were being experimented upon. When the software companies were small – and they didn't have to earn a living convincing stockholders they were planning great things – they just got the products out the door instead of wasting their time talking about it.

At the Australian end, small distribution operations staffed by enthusiastic users of the products they sold could actually answer questions, rather than employing support people to look up the answers in a book provided by head office, and when that fails, send a telex or a fax to head office repeating your question inaccurately enough to elicit a worthless response.

So after seven or eight years of this, how do we feel? We love it! Despite all its faults, it's still the most exciting industry we know of. Who knows, maybe if they straightened it out it would become boring. It's certainly been anything but boring so far, and I guess we'll just put up with whatever we get as long as it stays that way . . .

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American Graffiti

IF YOU'RE thinking about getting your data organised into a more useable form by putting it into a database, this column is for you. But before you conclude that the shopping bag you're currently using is sufficient, or that you have no data to put into a database and therefore you're not interested in the topic, stop and think about it for a moment. What about your personal telephone directory? Or do you collect stamps, coins, or something else that could stand some organising? Or maybe is there some other data you've thought about analysing, or even collecting – such as examining more closely your pattern of credit card purchases, or maybe data related to some kind of scientific study? There is a lot of data we all use that become more useful when put into a database; and, at least in my case, I've experienced unanticipated benefits as well, totally unrelated to databases, from spending time playing with a database. I also have some warnings about databases for the uninitiated.

PC-File+

A few months ago, I began using the Shareware database product PC-File+, written by Buttonware Incorporated; *the latest version available in Australia, File Express, was reviewed in IBM Underground, June '88*. Since this is the only database I've ever used, I can't compare it with any other databases. However, Ms Computer Writer assures me that it is very much like other databases. (She also says her brain will turn to Vegemite if she's required to sit through any more of my enthusiastic demos of PC-File+'s capabilities.)

Some of the things I especially like about it are its simplicity, in design, as well as in ease of use; its straightforwardness; the design of its command structure, which makes learning and using PC-File+ a highly intuitive, easy-to-acquire skill; and its forgiving nature – it seems difficult to screw up really badly with this database, and even if you do do something dumb, it's easy to recover.

Some other very nice things about it are the fact that you need invest only a minimum of time to learn PC-File+, and several on-line services (for example, CompuServe and others) have forums devoted to PC-File+. And, of course, since it's Shareware, you can't beat the price.

The first database I created contains information about those who have bought articles from me in the past, and those I've failed to sell articles to. Until I got PC-File+, I used a more traditional method of filing data, but after a while, it became much more difficult to stuff all those papers into the shoebox.

I liked PC-File+ almost the moment I first fired it up. Like any sensible, methodical computer user these days, I was in too much of a hurry to read the documentation – all 250 plus pages of it – so I put the distribution disk in my machine, took a guess as to the name of the executable file for PC-File+, and typed that in. PC-File+ didn't find any databases, so it asked me if I wanted to create one.

I also have some warnings about databases for the uninitiated.

I replied YES, and it led me through defining a database – field names, lengths of each field, how and where each field should be displayed and so on. As a former programmer, I know what's involved in creating a database from a technical perspective, and at first, it looked to me like PC-File+ was not going to ask me for some information I thought it would need – whether a field was numeric or character data, for example. I need not have been so twitchy – in due course, it did ask for, and get, the additional information.

Since I wasn't entirely sure of several things – for instance, that I'd defined my database well, or that the data was getting in as I'd intended, I decided to enter only four records. I did that, and then proceeded to some obvious follow-ons, such as modifying data, deleting records, and so on. To my delight, PC-File+ handled each request rapidly, simply, and, most important, in a highly intuitive manner.

Next, I decided to try exporting data – getting it into a conventional ASCII file that could be imported into other soft-

ware, such as word processors. Again, PC-File+ performed simply, admirably, intuitively, giving me a wide range of choices: export all fields or selected fields? All records or selected records? If selected records, what are the criteria for selecting? What format should the output file be in (choice of 13 widely used formats)?

By this point, I was excited at how easily I was steering this complex vehicle. One particularly interesting aspect of PC-File+ that never seems to get played up, let alone mentioned, is the clever way in which it encourages you by giving you all that nice reinforcement and good feedback. In fact, this response by PC-File+ kind of turned me into a big kid, pressing buttons and trying different functions to see what happened and how they worked.

I sorted the records in my database, selected, did FINDS, IMPORTed, and so on. In every case, it was easy to accomplish what I wanted to do and it required virtually no reading or learning. Moreover, PC-File+ turns out to be very forgiving. If you start something and change your mind, pressing Escape safely aborts the current action.

Earlier, I mentioned PC-File+'s simplicity. Here's an example. A PC-File+ database consists of three files. The actual data sits in one file, exactly as it was entered and without any additional control characters. A second file contains the names of all fields within your database, the length of each field and how many characters of data are to be displayed, and so on. This is a pure ASCII file, again with no special characters. The third part of a PC-File+ database is the index, which does contain special control information.

What this means is that if part of the database should become seemingly irretrievably clobbered, recovering may not be an impossible task. (I found this out one evening after I feared I'd clobbered my data and began examining things to see what I'd have to do to recover.)

YC Shareware?

On another note, *Your Computer* this month celebrates its seventh anniversary. In some ways, YC is like Shareware: the value it delivers is worth many times its cost; and the more it's used, the more valuable it becomes. Happy birthday, YC. I'd proud to be part of you.

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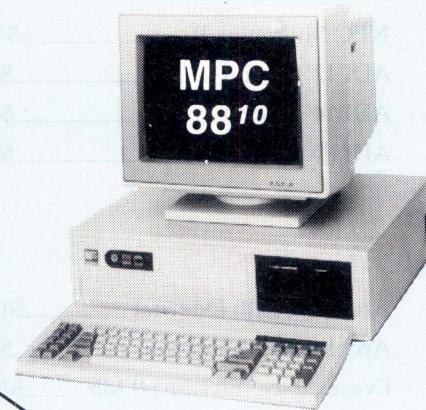
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Understanding the future

The Federal Government's Commission for the Future recently organised a seminar on technology for Federal MPs. Guest speaker at the seminar was Professor Bill Melody from the UK.

Professor Melody is Director of Information and Communications Technologies for the British Economic and Social Research Council.

His surprising message to the MPs at the seminar was that as communication improves, understanding declines. Referring to last October's stock market crash as an example, he said it was a perfect case of computers having too much information. When the experts used that computer information they all came up with the correct economic decision. However the decision was correct only if no one else was making the same decision. Unfortunately, all the stockmarket analysts had the same information.

Professor Melody said the problem with the stock market crash was everyone made the same decision on the basis of the same information. They all went over the cliff like lemmings.

The trend now with information consultants is to tell their clients less is better. According to Professor Melody information consultants now tell managers 90 per cent of data can be ignored – it is the vital 10 per cent that counts. This is a switch from a few years ago when consultants kept saying that more information is better. Some organisations claim that a consultant is someone who borrows your watch to tell you the time then sends you a bill.

Professor Melody was also critical of the marketing of new technology. He cited the British experience with fifth generation computers as an example.

Starting in 1982, Britain spent huge sums on research into fifth generation computers believing it was important for economic development. They then discovered there was more to it than simply coming up with new scientific information, Professor Melody said. Unless the economy can use new information in useful and efficient ways there is no real benefit.

Professor Melody quoted the *Economist* newspaper of 1983 which said about fifth generation computers – 'Invented in Europe, patented in America, sold by Japan.'

The craze over fifth generation computers was seen as a Japanese marketing device to get the British to invent computers that Japan could then sell back to England.

Referring to last October's stock market crash as an example, he said it was a perfect case of computers having too much information.

Professor Melody seriously questioned Japan's contribution to new technology. He said it was not new inventions in science and technology which had made Japan wealthy. Instead it was organisation of such things as the Just In Time Inventory System. Japan is the only nation that has closely studied the links between collaboration and competition. They know when to get their hi-tech industries working together on projects and when to make them compete. Western countries still needed to come to grips with that problem, Professor Melody concluded.

Australians like new technology

The Commission for the Future has released a study on Australian attitudes to computers and new technology. The study shows generally we like new ideas with some of us keener than others.

The new survey shows 63.5 per cent of Australians in favour of technology advances. Compared with a similar survey

five years ago, this shows an increased approval for new technology of just under 10 per cent.

The biggest increase in support is from professional groups. Nearly 90 per cent now have faith in new technology, a rise of over 20 per cent in the last five years. Education has a bearing on approval ratings with 63 per cent of tertiary educated Australians supporting technology advances. This is up 18 per cent since the 1983 survey.

Richard Eckersley from the CSIRO analysed the latest survey for the Commission which had 1,000 Australians over 14 years taking part. All were asked to rate technology developments in Australia as either positive or negative. Eckersley found some big differences in attitudes to new technology according to sex, age and education.

Less than half those with Primary education only thought technology was a good thing. This group showed little change in attitude from five years ago. Similarly, although a majority of older Australians (60 per cent) supported technology, this percentage had also not increased since 1983.

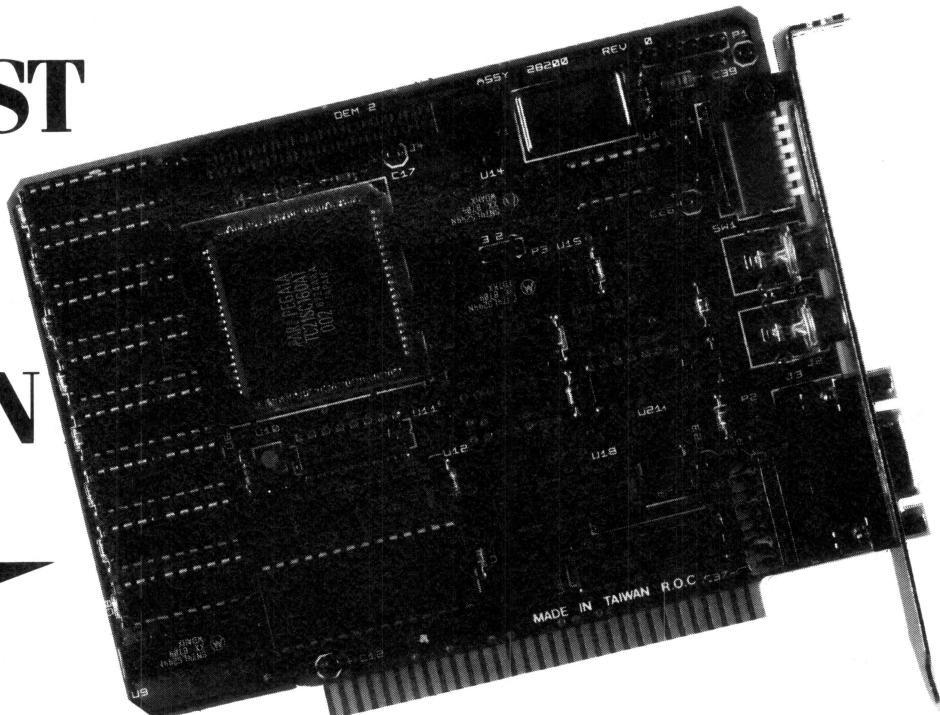
Australian teenagers, however, now showed greater interest in new technology. Since 1983 their support has risen 16 per cent to 65 per cent. The number of home PCs may have something to do with this.

Women remained less confident about new technology than men. Altogether 55 per cent of women surveyed expressed confidence in new technology compared with 72 per cent of men.

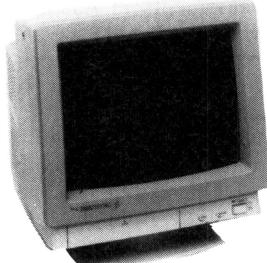
The biggest gap in technology approval was between primary and tertiary educated Australians. This gap has doubled since 1983 with tertiary educated Australians far more enthusiastic about new technology than those with primary education only.

The survey showed the biggest difference was between tertiary educated male managers and their primary educated counterparts. Primary educated managers expressed strong mistrust of new technologies while tertiary educated managers showed keen approval. □

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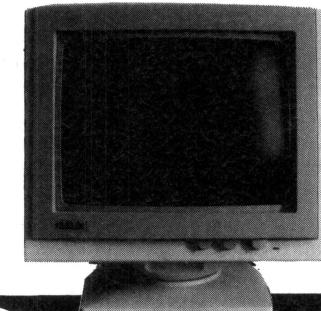
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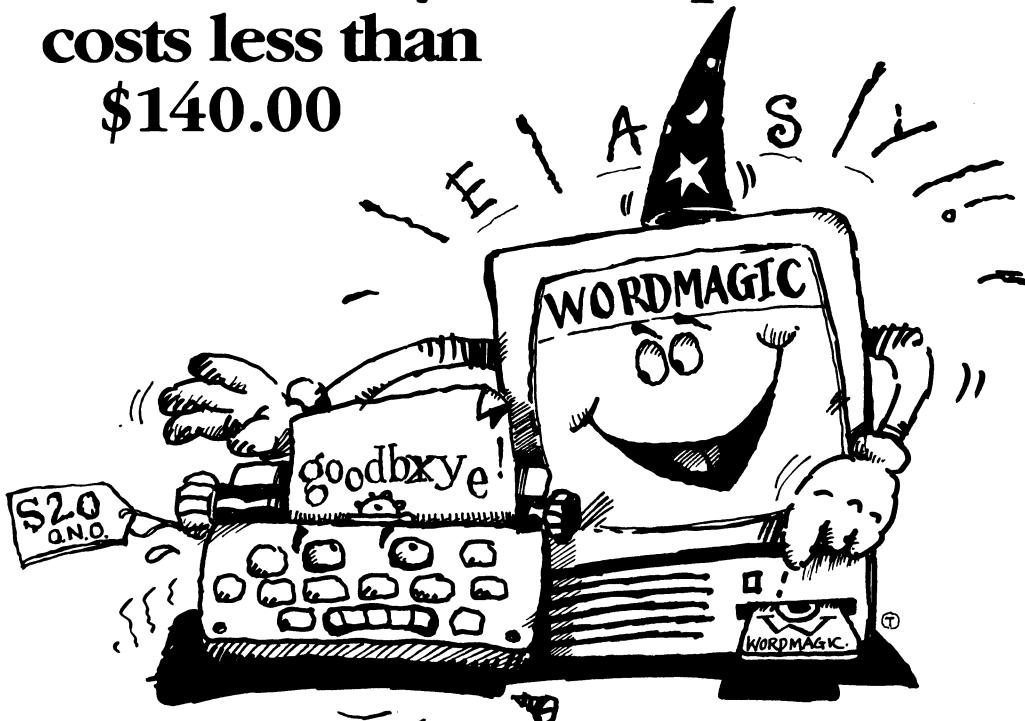
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Construct directories	N	N	Y	
Instant word count	N	N	Y	
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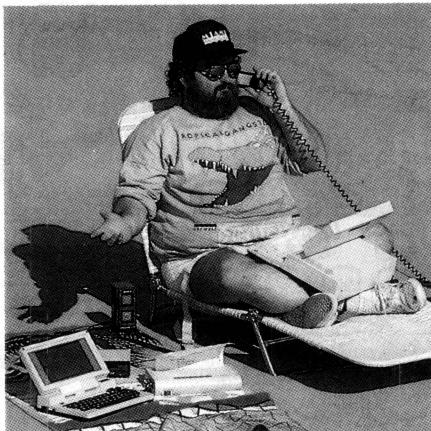
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No one's far from anyone anymore . . . or the portable office!

SOON AFTER buying my first acoustic coupler, I was looking through the Yellow Pages for an organisation called Modems Anonymous which would help me curb my online fetishes and database addictions. Now, with the advent of the cellular phone system and advances in cellular and radio modems, I've gone one more step in my quest for the ultimate portable communications system. No matter where I am in the world (except underground or in an airplane) I can compute, logon to my electronic mailboxes, send and receive telexes or facsimile messages and hold analog conversations.

Like my contemporaries in the music industry, I lead an extremely portable lifestyle with at least four overseas trips and dozens of interstate jaunts each year. Our clients include both corporate entities in entertainment such as Discronics, a compact disc manufacturer, Fairlight Instruments, who make the Computer Musical Instrument and Computer Video Instrument, the Pro-Image Group of video production houses and many more including artists like Midnight Oil and The Church.

The portable computer not only serves as an electronic notebook and word processor but also as a diary and 28K phone directory. But most important, it's my communications link via electronic mail (email) with the office in Sydney, reps in Los Angeles, New York and London, a band in Nimbin and clients around the world. It gives me a telex capability through Keylink which allows me to send and receive telexes anywhere in the world. Mailgrams and telegrams can also be sent as well as telex world letters through the OTC/Keylink/Dialcom international E-mail system.



For the past four years, Phil Tripp has tried to be the electronic renaissance man – sort of a portable digital prima donna on the low rent side. After years of swearing at computers, he bought a simple, trusty Tandy Model 100 and started swearing by digital technology. But that was only the start of Phil's story . . .

All this is now possible through the newest generation of computer and communications technology contained in one briefcase with an attached 'saddlebag' of electronic goodies. It's also totally wireless in that I don't have to be connected to any source of power due to rechargeable batteries, nor to any hard-wired phone lines owing to the new cellular phone.

And – the beauty of this new portable office environment is that it costs less than \$10,000 and is totally portable, allowing me to work and communicate from a yacht, the beach, a bush house with no phone or power, the backseat of a cab or even in a hot air balloon (that's me on the front cover of this issue, incidentally).

Using a combination of home grown products and items gleaned from overseas catalogs, I've created a remarkable array of technology. But it's not the technology that thrills me – not the whirr of the disc drives, beeps of the computer, swish of the ink jets across the page nor the tones of 'No One's Far From Anyone Anymore' emanating from the briefcase phone as I fax America while sitting in the loo – it's the applications that show how computers and communications have attained the totally portable status. Take these recent examples –

At the Australasian Performing Right Association Music Awards held at the Regent Hotel, we used the portable cellular phone with a battery operated fax machine to send off a barrage of press releases to daily newspapers, radio and television contacts from the venue as the prestigious awards were being handed out to the country's top songwriters. As well, over 40 electronic mail messages were sent as press releases to overseas music

industry trade press through the Keylink system, making deadlines for publications in New York, Los Angeles, London, Amsterdam and Tokyo.

For the *Your Computer* Computer of the Year Awards, we sent out our invitations to computer industry trade writers to their electronic mail boxes provided by OTC and maintained a correspondence with a few of them before actually meeting for the first time on the night of the event. We also used electronic mail to message back and forth with Angry Anderson, the keynote speaker, and to review written material with him for his speech.

We use electronic mail to send and receive account details or entire spreadsheets, communicating with our accountant in this manner and saving a substantial sum by not having his staff duplicate data entry.

Most of our clients are on electronic mail so that we can send drafts of press releases for their correction and get them back quickly without again having to duplicate keystrokes. As well, they can format them differently or create new headers if they wish. Copies of all correspondence received from trade publications or request for more information are routed to the clients – wherever they may be in the world – with just a few keystrokes to append and forward items to their electronic mail boxes.

On an airplane . . .

While on a plane from Sydney to Los Angeles, the battery powered computer, disk drive and printer churned out multiple reports, letters and messages which were faxed globally from a pay phone in the customs hall while waiting for my baggage to come up the carousel. At the pay phone next to the one connected to the fax, the trusty Tandy portable was linked through an acoustic coupler to the local Telenet data access number for sending and receiving electronic mail and telex messages via a Netlink to the Australian email box.

A music industry mate who manages a top band has his house so far out in the bush that his only contact with the world for weeks is by radio. When he's in town, he lives on a yacht moored on the Hawkesbury. At his bush retreat, he has a Wagner radio modem attached to his Toshiba TI100 to send data back to the office which has a similar high band set-up to maintain contact with him. On the yacht, he's just inside the Sydney cellular telephone network so his NetComm Cellular Modem links him into the electronic mail network with telex capability.

On the loo . . .

And, of course, I had to do it as I hinted before . . . sending a fax to a friend in Los Angeles while sitting in the loo at a major hotel. That was the ultimate in totally portable communications.

There's both fun and vital work-related aspects to our use of computers and communications. The beauty of the portable system is that you can do work anywhere you want or need. No longer saddled with a bulky home unit with limited memory and the necessity of an AC power source, it's easy to be under the palm tree or in the airliner pounding out paperwork or, best of all, creative writing.

technology and compactness of such a full on portable office. It easily led to great conversations about communications at the expense of the workload, and on four occasions, led to further developments which we shouldn't go into because this is a family magazine.

One of these young ladies who lives on the island of Maui and is appropriately named Delilah, figured out how to hook up her portable computer to a friend's modem and the two of us exchanged rather passionate electronic mail items for months after our first meeting and this led to our catching up with each other in more exotic locales later . . . nuff' said.



That's the essence of what portable computing has done for me. The lie that the salesman told me of the paperless office, was offset by the freedom to take my mind out for a stroll on the keyboard anytime and everywhere. With the properly designed portable system, you've got everything all the time, just waiting for a caress of the fingers to start the flow.

On the prowl . . .

Sound romantic? Well, let me tell you a story or two. I'm no Clark Gable – built more like a wrestler than a Romeo. But I found a surprising thing has happened over the past couple of years. Women are attracted to men who use portable computers. On a couple of overseas flights, I met several who just sort of came by my seat as I typed away, fascinated by the

There's another special woman in my life who is just as much of a globetrotter as I am but can't fly: my Mother, who's 73 and a confirmed cruise ship addict. A couple of years ago, I was supposed to meet her in London on a certain day but had to move my plans by a day. Trying to call her as she sailed around Africa on the *Canberra* would have cost a fortune and since I was zipping around the US and Europe at the time, she would have found it impossible to get back to me.

The solution to the problem was so simple. I merely sent her a telex from the airport in Los Angeles to the ship sailing around the Cape of Good Hope through OTC's Minerva email system and got to her with a confirmation coming into my email box upon delivery on the waves. She was then able to telex me back on my Aus-

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tralian telex number through email the next day (while I was in Montreal). I picked it up when I logged in at the airport on the way to New York. Sound complex? The travel, is but the communications aren't. Portables make access to a full range of communications so simple and convenient with the added capability of working anywhere.

Take this article as an example. It was started in a plane, slaved over at two desks in two different offices, worked on in a couple of taxis, altered at the beach, polished in bed, spell-checked on the patio and sent by modem to both the office of *Your Computer* and Editor Jake Kennedy's house as well as having a hardcopy faxed to Jake as backup.

On the job . . .

There are dozens of applications that I could detail about how we combine portability with communications. Here are just a few of the more notable ones to spotlight how we overcome logistical problems with our technology –

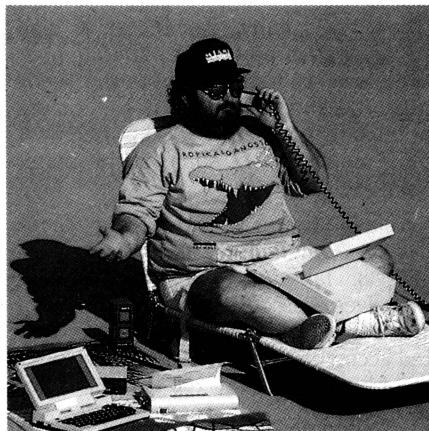
One of our clients, video producer Steve Priest, is on location in Gunnedah shooting a video clip. His production assistant emails us crew lists, shooting schedules and some anecdotes about the making of the clip so that we can construct a press release to send to a couple of key trade papers – all within one day so we can make their deadlines.

I'm in Los Angeles, get the info, reformat it within a few minutes, take a half hour to write the copy, email it back to Steve for approval and within a few hours, send it by email to my Sydney office for them to fax to *Encore* in Redfern, *Optic Music* in Los Angeles and *Billboard* in New York. And, as soon as they get production stills from him, they send paper copies to a list of other trade and consumer video publications around the world from a list that I sent by email which is then printed directly onto labels.

When the Divinyls were going to tour in the US, we drafted a press release with tour dates and other information. By formatting a series of 250 names and addresses of key print media or radio contacts around the States, we had a file prepared which we were able to upload into the electronic mail system of the US via a Netlink from here. In just under ten minutes of online time, we had sent 250 mailgrams through the US postal service to these contacts.

When we loaded the names and addresses, the message went to the post office nearest them, a letter was produced which arrived on their desks the next

And the beauty of this new portable office environment is that it costs less than \$10,000 and is totally portable.



TRIPP'S TIPS TO THE PORTABLE COMPUTIST

PORTABLE computing is not without its pitfalls. The following tips are gleaned from personal experience –

1) Never hook up a computer and acoustic coupler to a pay phone in France or any other country targeted by terrorists. I once did this at the airport in Paris and was made to feel the steel of an UZI machine gun in the back when the local *gendarmes* thought I was putting an explosive device in the phone booth. Because I spoke fluent French, I was able to worm my way out of trouble, but that might not be the case in Seoul, Bahrain, Tel Aviv or Tripoli when you try to log on.

2) About buying computer goodies by mail order: make sure you are getting tried and tested goods from a reputable dealer if you do order from overseas while travelling. Remember that mail order computer parts attract a hefty sales tax and duty when you collect them from Customs, negating any savings you might have made by circumventing the local distributor. And your warranty may not be applicable here either.

It may appear that after exchange rates and postage, the overseas supplier offers substantial saving over buying locally. But remember that the Australian supplier has to pay duty, sales tax, freight and often has to buy currency in advance or get hit with exchange rate fluctuations making their profit margin slim and their

morning. It created a tremendous instant buzz for the band. We've also used the same tactic for *Midnight Oil*, *The Church* and *Eurogliders* in varying volumes of mailgram drops. The price is only \$1.50 per item which is cheap considering the coverage and timing.

There are several other examples of how we use portables to deliver the goods – linking directly into the newspapers to drop press releases to the VDU's of editors and journalists, sending faxes from concert venues or on location with film crews at Expo, chatting in real time by keyboard between me in New York and Sydney with the home office staff – all the typed conversation is printed out for later reference.

The real advances that have been made with portable computers, enhanced portable telephones and the new wave of fax and other data communications technology, is that the user now has a most direct and instant connection to the people and organisations with whom he wants to communicate. But more important, there is also the direct and instant connection to the mind and imagination.

outlay prohibitive – so support them whenever possible.

3) Never ever take your computer or disks through or even near an airport metal detector. And, if at all possible, have them manually checked rather than going through the x-ray machine. The electromagnetic waves around a metal detector or pulses of the x-ray can wipe or corrupt disks and the delicate RAM of computers.

4) There's a great new market in used portable computers. Several of my friends have bought Tandy Model 100 units through *Trading Post* type of magazines, or through the classified columns of newspapers, for less than a third of the cost of a new machine. Check it out thoroughly, though, before laying out the money, especially the most heavily used keys like cursors and functions. Also, check out the recycled technology shops or computer traders as well as pawnshops for the occasional bargain. Or put an ad in the computer classifieds under 'portable wanted'!

5) Always have a condom with you if travelling by commercial airplane and using your computer in the public view. And never have a cup of coffee, cocktail or soft drink within arm's reach of a computer. Murphy's Law of Portables states that liquid always finds the path of least resistance to the most vulnerable and expensive part of a portable computer.

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THE LATEST IN PORTABLE PERIPHERALS

BECAUSE of Australia's relatively small market for speciality goods like 'portable peripherals', we most often don't see the latest applications of technology until they after they've become established overseas – particularly in the US.

There are a number of US-based mail order dealers in portable computing merchandise as well as catering to the Tandy Model 100 and 200 users' needs for upgrades and modifications. This is only a representative list of some of the better vendors –

Travelling Software, 19310 North Creek Parkway, Bothell WA 98011; phone 206-483-8088, fax 206-487-1284. They call themselves 'The definitive source for laptop computer software, hardware and related accessories' and they've got a selection of both Tandy 100/200 and IBM compatible goodies. Their service is excellent and technical support over the phone, superb. Their range of products is as broad as it is innovative. They have an illustrated and comprehensive catalog available and orders by credit card are simple. One of their hotter items is a Booster Pack which bumps up a Model 100 to two megabytes and can include a 1200 baud internal modem, nicad pack and lot of extras.

PG Design Electronics, 37560 Thirty-one Mile Rd, Richmond MI 48062; phone 313-727-2744. This company specialises in Model 100 and 200 upgrades with a 64K module available for US\$300 and a 224K module for US\$575. Peter Van Heusden runs the company and provides top notch service and support.

Portable Computer Support Group, 11035 Harry Hines Blvd, 206, Dallas TX 75229; phone 214-351-0564. They have a range of Tandy 100/200 products including a six ROM bank with nicad battery pack and a Super ROM with a number of applications programs.

Purple Computing, 420 Constitution Avenue, Camarillo CA 93010; Telex 888661, phone 805-987-4788. Their star items are cheap memory modules for the Model 100 and 200 and a US\$99 one kilo portable printer that is battery operated but uses thermal paper only. They also have an Australian dealer of their products: Softech Ltd, (02) 419-8899.



A PORTABLE COMPUTING HORROR STORY

PORTABLE COMPUTERS and their peripherals parts are getting so small and light, it's hard to notice them sometimes.

I ordered a couple of TTXpress portable thermal printers and some Sardine ROM chips from a mail order house to be delivered to a Los Angeles hotel. Upon arrival, the box was waiting for me and I opened it and removed one printer to use in the room, leaving the rest in the box with a pile of wrapping and styro packing.

Later that morning, I went for drinks with a friend. Upon my return, I noticed the box was not next to the dresser where I had left it. Thinking that the maid had diligently put it in the closet, I started to search. Within a few minutes I was freaked – not a trace! I called housekeeping and the maid had gone for the day. I called security and they filled in a report and as I was finishing, the head of housekeeping called and told me that they had contacted the maid and she had indeed found the box in my room. Thinking it was trash, she chuck it down the chute which sent it into the huge hotel trash compactor.

Hoping to retrieve it before it was too late, I got security to take me down into the bowels of the hotel where I looked in as saw about 40 cases of empty wine bottles from a conference the night before. I gave up the idea of wading through them and the other debris. My tiny printer and other parts had no doubt become even more compact. The happy ending though was that the hotel paid for the equipment and had it shipped to me the next day.

THE PORTABLE TRIPP

Computers — Tandy Model 100 with memory upgraded from 32K to 256K with an eight bank PG Designs snap in RAM pack. Sardine ROM chip from Travelling Software contains T-Word enhanced word processing and printing programs as well as an on-board 8000 word dictionary/spell checker or a 40,000 word expanded dictionary accessible on disk.

Tandy Model 200 with 72K memory and Sardine/T-Word ROM chip addition. Both computers run on rechargeable batteries internally as well as using an external 40 hour lead acid battery pack from American Micro Devices. ▽



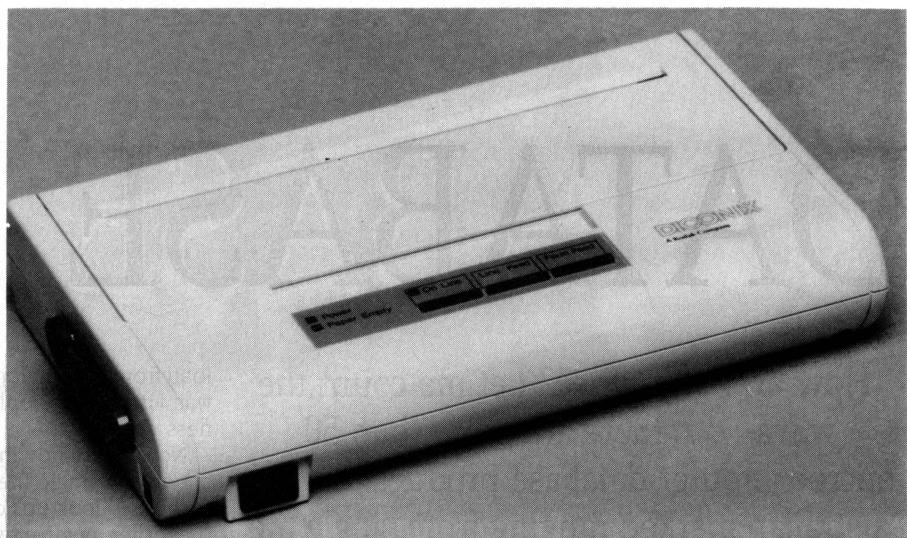
Next step up is an as yet undecided portable (possibly a Tandy 1400LT, Toshiba 1200, Spark, NEC Multispeed or Zenith) with about a megabyte of RAM, and a 5 to 20 megabyte hard drive onboard with two floppy drives.

Mobile phone — Racal CDL440 Cellular Briefcase telephone with three watts of transmission power, builtin rechargeable gel cell battery pack allowing 1 hour of conversation or seven hours on standby. It offers hands-free talking or direct plug connection for a cellular modem.



Worldport pocket modem — 300/1200 Bell/CCITT compatible powered by 9 volt rechargeable battery. It has separate acoustic cups as well as an RJ11 direct connect cable. △

Tandy multiple DC voltage switchable transformers in 110 volt and 220 volt AC models for different countries. Used for recharging American Micro devices lead acid batteries as well as powering computers and peripherals on the road in hotels.



Peripherals — Tandy Model 2 Disk Drive with 200K per 3 1/2 inch disk. It also runs on rechargeable batteries. △

Diconix portable inkjet printer that uses plain paper rather than thermal. It's battery-powered — and reviewed on its own in this issue.

Portable fax — Portafax (available through NetComm) Model B battery operated Group 3 facsimile transceiver that doubles as a photocopier with 25 pages of faxes or 15 pages of copies per charge of batteries.

Sony Discman portable compact disc player with two Sony RSR 55 portable speakers — all powered by rechargeable batteries.

Sanyo battery recharger — one for AA and one for C cells.

Travelpak multi-standard voltage converter.

Netcomm Cellular 300/1200 Bell/CCITT Modem powered from the cellular telephone

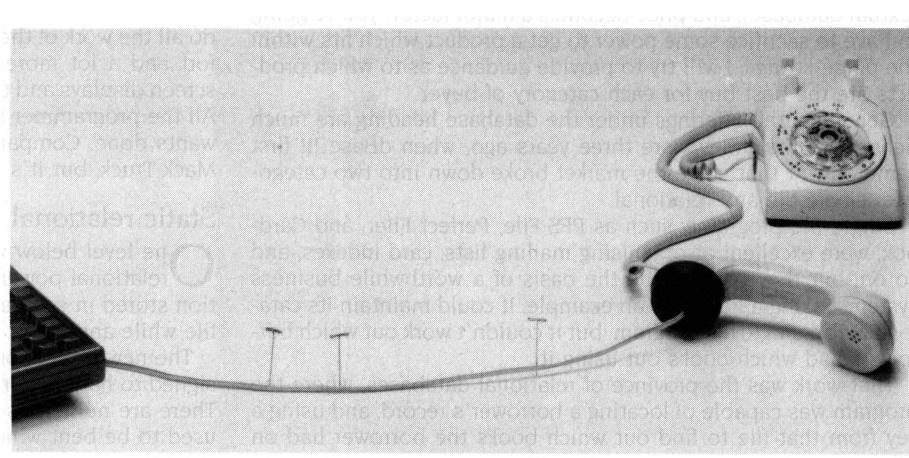
Blackjack modem adapter for screwing onto phone handset to allow direct modem line connection to the mouthpiece. ▽

Sendata 700M acoustic coupler — 300 baud Bell/CCITT switchable. I use it as a backup.



Solarcell 6 volt folding photovoltaic power source/recharger for running computer at the beach or recharging batteries from sun or room lights. △

Itty Bitty Book Light — battery operated reading lamp for clamping onto computers in bed or on airplanes at night.



DATABASE DATA

How do I store thee? Let me count the ways . . . there are more than 50 microcomputer database products on the Australian market, ranging from single file systems through text specialists to relational multiuser and networked packages. Over the next few months, Steve Keen will assess a selection of the most interesting databases (and suggest the use for which each seems most-suited).

IN THIS series of articles, I'll be looking at a number of aspects of each program: price, the program's specialisation (if any), how relational it is, whether it's designed for multiuser environments, and how easy it is to drive. Clearly, those features will weigh differently in the minds of different purchasers.

For a business the key issues in databases, in descending order of importance, are likely to be the degree of relational capability, its multiuser capabilities, and ease of use. The order shifts somewhat for an individual purchaser. Multiuser capability is unimportant, the chief function to which you intend putting the program is vital (there's no sense in buying dBase III if you want to organise a textual database), and price becomes a major factor: you're going to have to sacrifice some power to get a product which fits within the purse-strings. I will try to provide guidance as to which products are the best buy for each category of buyer.

Generally, the offerings under the database heading are much richer now than they were three years ago, when dBase III first came out. At that stage the market broke down into two categories: single file and relational.

Single file programs, such as PFS:File, Perfect Filer, and Cardbox, were excellent at organising mailing lists, card indexes, and so on, but they couldn't be the basis of a worthwhile business system. Taking a library as an example, it could maintain its catalog using a single file program, but it couldn't work out which borrowers had which books out using it.

That work was the province of relational databases, where the program was capable of locating a borrower's record, and using a key from that file to find out which books the borrower had on

loan from the catalog file. Though it had some competitors, dBase was virtually the only worthy product on the street at that business end.

Nowadays the single file/relational division is blurred. Some ostensibly single file programs — such as Q&A — now have the ability to 'look up' other files while updating a main one. From the other perspective, the market definition of relational has broadened somewhat. When dBase was the only Mack Truck on the block, relational simply meant that a dBase programmer could write a dBase program that linked files together.

In rough terms, the dBase code to find out which books a borrower had out on loan would be as follows —

```
SELECT BORROWER
? X,Y SAY "Enter borrower's name"
? X,Y+30 GET name
SEEK name
STORE bcode to mbcodes
SELECT CATALOG
SEEK mbcodes
WHILE .NOT. EOF() .AND. bcode = mbcodes
? X+1,Y SAY author
? X+1,Y+30 SAY title
SKIP
ENDDO
```

Obviously, though dBase provides the multifiles, and the programmer has to provide the relations. Nowadays, there are programs where the commands —

```
FORM SELECT customer_inquiry INPUT
FIND ALL BOOKS BORROWED
  BY borrower SORTED BY AUTHOR, TITLE
REPORT outstanding
```

do all the work of the dBase code set out above, with a lot less effort and a lot more *panache*. In these programs, the multifiles, screen displays and the relationships are handled by the program. All the programmer has to do is tell the program what he or she wants done. Compared to this kind of program, dBase is still a Mack Truck, but it's a Mack Truck without gears.

Static relational power

One level below what dBase offers is could be called 'static' relational power. This is where you are able to link information stored in separate files, but you are not able to consult one file while another is being updated.

The newest kids on the block are the specialist databases, designed to handle particular kinds of information (especially text). There are numerous activities to which unspecialised databases used to be bent which are far better handled by this new breed.

Many of them overturn the old computer adage GIGO — 'garbage in garbage out' — by enabling you to make sense out of unstructured inputs.

This article looks at a spectrum of products towards the lower end of the price range: Memory Mate, a text specialist database; Q&A, a program which is run like a single file program but has the fundamentals of a relational database; Dac Easy Base (DEB), a clone (with some innovations) of the now obsolete dBase II; and Reflex, a single file database with an analytic bent.

Memory Mate

The simplest measure of my regard for Memory Mate (its DOS name is Memo) is that it is the first program my computer loads after DOS. It does what most databases do very badly — handle textual information and time. It does both functions so well that I have become utterly dependent upon it.

Memo consists of a disk based database of up to 2 megabytes, with an EXE file which can be either memory resident (taking roughly 60 kilobytes of RAM) or invoked and executed from DOS, like conventional databases. Unlike most databases, it does not use fields to organise information: each record is simply free form text. The reason this results in order rather than chaos is because Memo indexes every word (except the 'logical' words 'and', 'or', 'not') in every record.

This frees you from having to know the structure of the database to retrieve information; to find what you want, you simply type in a search command. If you want to find information about computers and communications, you simply type in the search command Computers and Communications. Memo will locate all records which include the words 'computers' and 'communications', wherever they might occur in the records.

This facility encourages you to be as verbose as possible in describing every entry in your database, because every word becomes a keyword. The more you enter, the more cross references you have.

It also makes Memory Mate the first application I have seen which would actually be useful in that supposed key function of the home computer, keeping a list of recipes. Look in the 'fridge and pantry to see what you've got to cook, type all the ingredients in to a Find command, and see what recipes suit. Or think what you'd like to make, and find all the necessary ingredients.

The main commands are Find, Narrow, Reject, Cut and Paste. Find's function is obvious; what is not obvious is its speed. On an AT compatible, it takes under a second to find a second to find all the records with the word 'the' in them, out of a 500 record database.

Narrow acts as a logical filter on your current selection, while Reject individually removes unwanted records from those currently retrieved. Cut and Paste, whose functions are also obvious (ditto Copies), let you transfer information between records, as well as editing within one.

Ctrl-C sets up Memo's copy facility to copy a marked area of the screen; return to Memo via Ctrl-E(xit) and choose Paste, and the screen information is transferred to the current record.

There is a faster way to get a bulk of information into Memo from another database — the In command. This can either read in data using a set number of lines as record markers, or a special character (such as a tilde) as a delimiter. That's how I pulled my Kookaburra telephone book into Memo, transferring over 250 addresses in about 10 seconds (including indexing). Likewise, Out exports the current records as an ASCII file, with a tilde separating each record.

While its text management features alone are worth the \$119 price tag, it wouldn't be half the program without its date stamping. When a record is first entered, you have to Save it from the menu (after that, any modifications are automatically saved whenever you move from one record to another). Then and when-

Find	Narrow	Reject	Cut	Ditto	Paste	Jump	F1 for Help		10 of 27 Found
Save	View	Type	In	Out	Zap	Undo	Price		
Database products for review									
Product	Distributor		Phone						
DBase III+	Imagineering		697-8666/8610						
Reflex			*						
TAS	Business Tools	08 211-7922							
Q&A	PCExtras	319-2155							665 inc tax
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DBXL	Julius Sule	745-1995							
Tracker									
Mindex	KCM								
Sculptor	MPD (Brad)		436-0422						

Created: 3/30/88 Modified: 5/6/88 Reminder: 5/7/88 Ins

Figure 1. Memory Mate's screen is divided into four areas: two top of screen boxes, which show the prompt F1 for Help and the number of records currently selected, and the 15 program commands; the record (with 19 of a potential 60 lines visible); and a status line.

Find	Narrow	Reject	Cut	Ditto	Paste	Jump	F1 for Help		1 of 1 Found
Save	View	Type	In	Out	Zap	Undo	Price		
Jake Kennedy, Editor; Alecia Khartu, Production Editor; Robert Thirwell, Features Editor; Alison. Your Computer 180 Bourke Road Alexandria 693-6666 h 693-6987 2608 (extension in cool room) Vertical market software: select 4 packages for special review: Apollo, Samm, July/August Database issue! Brad Boxall Managing Editor Database distributors Rbase System 5 Microsoft The word for which you have searched, in this case Jake, is highlighted in inverse video (green, if you have a colour screen).									
Jake Kennedy, Editor; Alecia Khartu, Production Editor; Robert Thirwell, Features Editor; Alison. Your Computer 180 Bourke Road Alexandria 693-6666 h 693-6987 2608 (extension in cool room) Vertical market software: select 4 packages for special review: Apollo, Samm, July/August Database issue! Brad Boxall Managing Editor Database distributors Rbase System 5 Microsoft The word for which you have searched, in this case Jake, is highlighted in inverse video (green, if you have a colour screen).									

Created: 2/7/88 Modified: 5/24/88 Reminder: Ins

Figure 2. Unlike most databases, Memory Mate doesn't use fields to organise information: each record is simply free form text and the program indexes every word (except the 'logical' words 'and', 'or', 'not') in every record.

Q&A MAIN MENU	
F - File	
R - Report	
W - Write	
A - Assistant	
U - Utilities	
X - Exit Q&A	

Q&A Version 3.0 Copyright (C) 1985-1988, Symantec All rights reserved
X-Exit to DOS F1-Description of choices ↵ Continue

Figure 3. Q&A's Main Menu — Version 3 includes the ability to combine database report output with PostScript files and menu choices can now be made with a single key.

ever you save from the menu, Memo prompts you for a reminder date (in American format). When you load the program on or after that date, that and all other similarly dated records will be recalled for you. Once a task has been completed, you can save over the record without a date to remove the reminder.

Sample Q&A Version 3.0 Database
File Imported from Reflex

Date of Sale :AA	Product:AB
Salesman :AC	Amount of Sale:AD
Number of units:AE	>

SAMPLE Q&A DATABASE DESIGN SCREEN. THE ALPHABETIC MARKERS (AA,AB, ETC.) ARE THE FIELD IDENTIFIERS THAT Q&A USES INTERNALLY.

THE DOUBLE AND SINGLE BOXES WERE DRAWN WITH THE CURSOR KEYS; NO NEED TO REMEMBER THE ASCII CHARACTER SET AND TYPE THEM IN YOURSELF, AS WITH SOME PROGRAMS.

QATEST 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Cap 1 4 Line 19 of Page 1 of 1
Esc-Cancel F1-How to design F8-Options F10-Continue

Figure 4. When Q&A is first accessed for any purpose apart from data entry, it displays the blank form and asks for retrieval specifications. The database is sorted by typing numbers in each field you wish to sort on, plus alphabetic commands to specify ascending or descending, case sensitive or otherwise. Reports are designed by specifying which fields are to go in which order, using numbers once more.

HOW MANY SWIFTS WERE SOLD IN 1985

I don't know the word highlighted above. What would you like to do?

E - Edit the highlighted word
T - Teach me a new word
S - See or change my vocabulary
G - Go ahead (the word doesn't matter)

QATEST.DTF Esc-Cancel ← Continue

Figure 5. The Intelligent Assistant allows you to make English-language queries of Q&A after a preliminary definition of terms.

DAC Easy Base V1.0 Copyright (c) 1986 DAC Software, Inc.

Whole Menu

System	Create	Edit	Display	Modify
Use	Create	Edit	List	Sort
Partial	Abbrev	Append	Display	Index
Quit	Form	Insert	View	Pack
Clear	Rename	Delete	Count	Replace
Run	Set	Recall	Sum	Modify str
Select		Change fld		
Position	Join	Variable	File	Report
Skip	Copy	Store	Save	Report
Goto	Join	Release	Restore	Top of form
Find	Total		Import	
Locate	Update		Export	

Explanation
System commands that affect the state of the database
Press F1 for help, or move to a command with cursor keys and press ENTER

Figure 6. Dac Easy Base (DEB) is a dBase clone with a well designed menu system, superior in some ways to that supplied with dBase III+ — the Assistant. DEB's menu allows you to select up to three files at once (in primary, secondary and tertiary work areas) and there are more menu commands.

In one go, Memory Mate has overcome my previous reputation as an 'absent minded Professor'. Now my friends and work associates describe me as 'well organised'. If only they knew!

Q&A

This a disk-based database has an integrated word processor. It has cosmetic similarities to the old PFS:File and PFS:Write, but beneath the cosmetics are a host of features which give it much more power than its apparent competitors.

It is the only one of this month's crop to support multiuser operation, on a wide range of networks. The program has built-in file and record locking, and can allow you to assign passwords with different levels of database access.

I am inclined to adjudge Q&A the 'most improved' product in this collection of database data. I first used Q&A over two years ago, and while I was impressed, there were a number of rough edges which made the program less powerful and harder to drive than it had promised. These included such things as inconsistently implemented function key commands, the necessity for pressing Return to signify main menu choices, and the absence of any relational powers. All these have been overcome in the latest version: function keys are more consistent, and the major ones are labelled onscreen; menu choices can be made single key, and the program can link two or more files dynamically. Other improvements include the ability to combine database report output with PostScript files (which lets you print a report combined with a company logo, for example).

Creating a database

The similarities to PFS:File begin with form design. Fields are signified by a colon at the end of a group of words (field names can contain spaces). Fields will be as long as the space between the name and the next field name, unless you put in a > as a terminator. Multiline fields are available, defined by starting a rectangular area with < and ending it with >.

Headings are simply typed in. You can also put single or double line boxes around headings and groups of single line fields, which greatly improves form appearance. Fields and headings can be centred, though no additional embellishment (such as boldfacing or underlining) is possible, despite the display powers of Q&A's word processing companion.

Fields are moved simply by retyping them elsewhere on the screen. This includes retyping the two-character alphabetic marker which Q&A actually uses to keep track of fields; if they are omitted or corrupted, your data is likewise affected.

Data entry and retrieval

All aspects of the program use the form. When you first access the database for any purpose apart from data entry, Q&A displays the blank form and asks you to enter retrieval specifications. You sort the database by typing numbers in each field you wish to sort on, plus alphabetic commands to specify ascending or descending, case sensitive or otherwise. Reports are designed by specifying which fields are to go in which order, using numbers once more.

Q&A's editing includes both changing individual records, and mass updating. For the latter process you nominate the forms to be edited using the Retrieve specification (employing your standard form). Next you enter the changes you want in each field, using a number preceded by a hash sign to identify each field. The changes can involve formulas such as —

#1=#1*1.10

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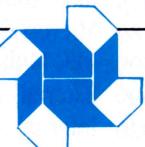
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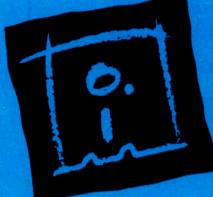
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This is 'dynamic' relational power, where the program is able to consult other files as data is entered, and not simply produce a collated database from information already entered into two source databases, as does the JOIN command in dBase or similar, limited functions in some of the other packages reviewed. It puts Q&A in the same category as Ability Plus as a low cost means of getting true relational power, and I think it would be easier for most users to run than Ability.

Predictably, a database which has an integrated word processor is pretty hot shakes when it comes to merge printing. You can design a form letter in the word processor and easily merge it with a database, something that takes a lot of shuffling with dBase and other file specialists. The program prompts you for the database with which you wish to merge the letter, lets you choose fields to insert by pointing, and handles most of the formatting details automatically. It also does mailing labels, and, incidentally, provides a way around the limitation of columnar reports. If you want a multiline report, simply create a label document and merge the database with it.

The Intelligent Assistant

The main claim to fame for Q&A used to be the Intelligent Assistant (IA), an artificial intelligence feature which enables you to make English language queries of your database, after a preliminary definition of terms.

This commences with the program analysing the database to find all unique words in it. The database I used, transferred from Reflex, contained sales data for a canoe company; at this stage Q&A 'knew' that the products field contained the names Swift, Paddles and so on.

Next, you are asked to tell Q&A what the database is about, which fields to use in its standard report, which fields contain names, titles and locations, units of measurement and adjectival indications of size (things like tall or short for height; the Intelligent Assistant already knows standard comparative words like big, small and so on, and it can analyse these to derive bigger, smallest and so on.), and verbs such as Hire, Sack and so on.

You can have quite a bit of fun with synonyms, which allow complex definitions to be built. The word 'Boat' in my trial database was related to all the canoe names, but not the paddles. The manual gives the example of defining Fat Cat as an employee whose income exceeds the average income by 50 per cent.

Using the IA is relatively straightforward. You type an English language request in a box. IA then interprets this as best it can to translate it into a report command. If words are struck which it can't interpret, you are asked to define them in relation to the current database. This can be as simple as adding a new adjective to describe size, or a new verb. If the request can be successfully parsed, then the report is displayed.

A further request can assume the result of the previous request: the enquiry 'Show me the salaries in the sales department' followed by 'Sort them by employee age' would produce the same result as a composite single enquiry.

One limitation of IA which remains from earlier versions of the program is the inability to perform substring searches, even though that facility is built into the search features of the file manager itself. For example, Q&A comes with an example property database which includes a house in National Avenue. The request 'How many houses are there in National Avenue?' failed because the IA couldn't interpret the word 'National'. Yet the retrieve specification '..National..' from the file menu found the house with ease.

As yet it can't handle multiple databases, but I expect that in future the IA will be extended to this, in a fashion which will make

Entered on: 19-MAY-1988		Customer Record	Changed on: 19-MAY-1988
Record:	3	Current Page:	1
First Name	Andrew	Surname	Kreisler
Company	Bray Books	Industry	Publishing
Discount	.100	Number:	3

Enter Backup Advance Memo Delete Prev page Next page Goto Quit

Figure 7. Compared to the single file offerings at the same end of the price range, Dac Easy Base has a lot to recommend it. Though you have to work to get relational power out of DEB, it is nonetheless there.

up a data dictionary for your application. Then the request 'Print overdue notices for all the customers who have movies worth more than \$2 outstanding' will be a possibility. When that day arrives, Q&A will have few rivals for both ease of use and power. Considering that the program also includes a full featured word processor, Q&A stands out as one of the true bargains in software.

DAC Easy Base

In one sentence, Dac Easy Base (DEB) is a cheap but dated dBase clone, with most of its features, but lacking some of the speed. It is a clone of dBase II, not III, but it extends the old II in a number of ways.

For a start, it supports three open databases at once, versus two for the now defunct dBase II. This makes it possible to write an application which has databases for customers, products, and sales of products to customers — otherwise known as invoices. Obviously, three is the minimum number of databases for that very common application, and old dBase hands had to do considerable programming footwork to design an application with just two files.

It supports calculated fields, so when you create a database you can specify that a particular field (say, TotalPrice) is the product of other fields (Price*Quantity*{1-Discount}). It also supports memo fields, though they are not as long as the dBase variety. DEB can sort on all the fields in a database at once. The number of records is unlimited, compared to old dBase II's 65,000 limit (the new beast supports 10 billion, which is effectively unlimited).

DEB has a well designed menu system, superior in some ways to that supplied with dBase III+ — the Assistant. DEB's menu allows you to select up to three files at once (in primary, secondary and tertiary work areas), whereas the Assistant stops at the one file. There are more menu commands, and they are better structured than those in Assist.

User interface

There are two DEB menus: a Partial one covering the major file management commands, and generally taking just one keypress to run; and a Whole menu which includes facilities such as running a command file, joining databases, and managing memory variables, which takes two keypresses to run — the first letter of the menu category, then the first letter of the desired command. This is significantly faster than dBase's Assist, which requires you to point at both the main menu option and the re-

quired command using the cursor keys (DEB also supports cursor pointing).

The menus are subdivided into ten categories: System, Create, Edit Display, Modify, Report (all of which are on the Partial menu), Position, Join, Variable, File. Each category has about six commands on the Whole menu; on the Partial, the average is three. They cover everything you would want to do with one file at a time, plus the dual file procedure of creating a joined database.

The Crosstab View is Reflex's most useful offering, which in some ways sidesteps its single file limitations.

Creating a database

Designing a database begins with supplying a file name, then entering the fields, one at a time. The name and attributes of each field being defined is displayed in the top half of the screen, while the previously defined fields are shown in the bottom half. The attributes are the standard dBase type, length and decimals, plus also a formula for calculated fields.

The entire process is menu controlled, with the bottom of screen menu accessed by pressing Escape. Options are chosen by pressing the first letter, or highlighting using the cursor key and pressing return. File creation options include entering the field as defined, renaming a field, deleting it and so on — things which are managed by Ctrl-key combinations in dBase III.

Data entry and retrieval

The same menu approach is applied throughout DEB. The options for editing, for example, are Enter (which records any changes), Backup, Advance, Memo, Delete and Goto. You can move about the database, globally change records, list them and design forms (only one per database, just like dBase itself), using the menu system.

DEB offers two types of reports from the menu system, a columnar report and a page based report. The former is limited to one

line per record; the latter prints as many lines per record as you desire, putting fields wherever you want them on the page, but uses one page per record. Most of my reports use more than one line per record, but print as many records on a page as will fit. To get that sort of report from DEB, you have to write a dBase II program.

The dBase dot

Beyond the menus lie the familiar dBase dot prompt, and also the backslash key, which allows you to enter a one line dBase command while still at the menu. At this level there are some limitations compared to dBase II, and numerous omissions compared to III. It doesn't support nesting of macros (which is not something you should use in dBase programs anyway), and it can't insert records into an indexed file. (It can only append. However, this again isn't an important problem since there's normally no need to insert into records in an indexed database.)

There is also no built-in word processor (though Dac sells its own, equally cheap word processor). Compared to dBase III+, you lose the multiuser capability, the ability to access up to ten databases, the SET RELATION TO command (as limited as it is), and numerous other power-oriented features. But there have to be some sacrifices for price.

If you buy it to write your own programs, you'd be advised to track down a copy of Adam Green's (I think the name is right) book on programming in dBase II. The manual devotes 90 per cent of its 200 pages to the menu system, with the description of dBase programming commands in the remaining 20 pages being cursory in the extreme. dBase III's manuals would be of no use, since they are almost as cursory, and contain many commands that aren't in DEB.

DEB would have had more appeal during the reign of dBase II, as a cheap means for the non-business user to get dBase style power, or have a (legal) home 'copy' of dBase. Nowadays, at \$99 it's 'just' a very reasonably priced relational database; if you actually want dBase compatibility, you'll have to go for DBXL, Foxbase, or VP Info.

It gets quite a high rating in the low end stakes, simply because it is relational and so cheap. But it isn't a menu-driven relational database, simply because the menu doesn't enable you to dynamically link two files, as you can with Ability Plus, for example;

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WS31/2

if you want the relational power, you'll have to do the hard slog of writing a program to get it.

Compared to the single file offerings at the same end of the price range, it has a lot to recommend it. Though you have to work to get relational power out of DEB, it is nonetheless there, and you can do things with a relational file that are simply impossible with a flat one.

Reflex

Before Reflex, Borland had been a programming language specialist; Reflex was its first, impressive step into the application program league in 1986.

In many ways, Reflex is a more impressive offering than its recent companion, the spreadsheet Quattro. Quattro's delivers what has always been Borland's main strength — speed — but apart from that and quality graphics it does little to extend the spreadsheet concept. Reflex, on the other hand, did advance the database paradigm a few cogs, within the single file limitations.

Most databases give you three ways to look at your data: through forms, lists and reports. Reflex added two other 'views' — graphs and cross-tabulation. Also, you can see three of the views at once on screen, with each one dynamically linked to the other — as you move down the list view, the form view shows full details of the current record. Even more impressive is moving along a graph, and seeing the form and list view change to suit.

This isn't just cosmetic. Reflex's strength is in data analysis, and the linking of the three views helps to spot trends in your data. Setting the graph to count, for example, and graphing sales against Suburb, lets you see at a glance where most of your sales are made.

User interface

Reflex drives the PC in graphics mode, which has the advantage on EGA monitors of showing you 26 lines of data in the list view. The program is run by a combination of a top of screen menu with pop-down options (accessed by pressing the / key), and function keys which cover movement, swapping between views on screen, sorting, and filtering the database. F10 functions as a 'choices' key, which shows you available files in the file menu, fields when you are deciding what information to graph, statistical functions in the options menus for Graph and Crosstab, and so on.

Data entry and retrieval

You can enter data through either the list or form view, and the program makes no distinction between displaying and editing data (like dBase III+'s Browse command, but unlike its List command). Your first data entry sets the field type for each field — which speeds up data definition for most textual and numeric fields, but confuses Date fields which are first taken to be numeric. You overcome this using the Field and Sort Settings table, of which more later. Tables are a large part of Reflex's interface.

Reflex is a predominantly a RAM based program (which limits the number of records that can be stored), though half of a file can be read into RAM at a time, allowing a maximum disk filesize of 65,000 records. It also supports extended memory, so a suitably configured computer can hold up to 32,500 records in RAM.

In addition to the straight entry of data, Reflex offers the Vary tool, which enables you to generate a whole series of records, with the contents of one field changing each time according to a formula. This can be applied to simple tasks like creating a skeleton form containing needed dates and company divisions, through to creating hypothetical sales results as a prelude to What If? analysis.

Searching and selecting

Reflex uses the same system to search for data, and to apply a filter to the database so that only the records meeting the criteria are displayed, or used in analysis. Search/filter conditions are entered into a table, which lists field names down the left hand side. Once a condition is entered for a particular field (say, City = Sydney), a second column opens up; if you type City = Melbourne there, this amounts to a logical OR in dBase — 'City = Sydney OR City = Melbourne'. Entries in the same column are logical ANDs 'City = Sydney and Amount > 10000' are combined to exclude any records not meeting both criteria.

This greatly simplifies one of the more complex database procedures for novice users. The only drawback is that you can save only one filter with the file, so if there are a number of subsets of your data that you look at frequently, you have to redefine each of them every time you use Reflex.

You can save the results of a filter as a separate file, but that means you then have multiple copies of your data, which may have out of date data.

Sorting, controlled from the Records menu, is easy and fast. As is usual with Reflex, you are presented with a table listing all field names, with columns also for field type, any formulas, a sort precedence and whether this is ascending or descending, a format for field types and Precision. Reflex can sort on up to five fields at once, and you indicate which ones to use by putting numbers from 1 to 5 in the sort column.

Reports are a cinch to design with Reflex, though they are controlled by a separate EXE file. Using the Choices key, you point and select the fields you wish to include in your report, using as many lines per record as you desire. Headers, footers, column breaks and the like are controlled from the attributes menu, which as usual is accessed using the backslash key. This specifies whether a field is repeated in every record, in the header or footer, or whenever the value changes. As you work, a sample report layout (using either field names or the contents of your first record) is displayed on screen.

Graphs

Reflex's graphs were good when they first came out — I even used them for my presentations for a while — but that facet of the industry has moved a long way since then. Reflex only allows one graph type at a time — Bar, Line or Scatter — whereas Graphtime II, a graphics package in the same price range, offers multiple types at once. Print quality is okay on a dot matrix printer, but it certainly isn't the presentation quality that Graphtime or the Magician give. However, the summary statistics features built in to the Graph package (Sum, Count, Average, Min, Max and Standard Deviation) are useful, and the graph design interface is as good as anybody's.

Analysis with Crosstab

The Crosstab View is Reflex's most useful offering, which in some ways sidesteps its single file limitations. It enables you to see how one aspect of your data varies as a result of changes in two others — for example, how sales revenue varies with salesperson and product.

Crosstab view begins with a box, with the label 'ALL' on its left and top sides. You specify that a particular field is to go along the top, and another down the side, while the contents of the box display the results of a calculation on a third field, such as sales quantity, sales revenue and so on. For example, a company's sales revenue will vary depending on the product being sold and the region it is sold to. You can use the Crosstab view to see how the region and the product interact, or the product and the date of sale. The summary information presented about sales can be

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average sales, maximum, minimum, even the standard deviation.

This feature and the interaction between the Form, List and Graph views justifies giving Reflex a 'specialist' tag, while its price puts it in the 'bargain' category as well. However, it is less of a bargain than it was when it first came out. The program has been around for two years now, with little enhancement to its features, while in the meanwhile the features of many other packages — Q&A in particular — have been considerably beefed up.

Conclusion

Memory Mate, distributed by Imagineering, should be on every computer buyer's list, from home user to large business. It is the electronic equivalent of a personal secretary.

Q&A should be looked at seriously by home users who can afford its high price tag, since it includes a word processor in the price (there is an upgrade for owners of Version 2.0, which given the addition of relational capacity and is well worth the price). Small businesses who until now thought dBase was their only option should definitely give Q&A a workout. It should enable them to design a multifile system for such activities as customer invoicing with substantially less heartburn than writing a similar application in dBase III+.

Reflex is another product that both home buyers and businesses could consider. It is more useful for the user interested in numerical analysis than records management.

DAC Easy Base, the cheapest of the products reviewed to date, is quite acceptable as a single file manager for the novice user, and it offers the possibility of writing dBase style programs for a multifile system. While it is a clone of a now obsolete program,

any home user who wants to learn about database programming could find it a worthwhile investment. For businesses trying to save money on program costs, I would recommend Q&A ahead of it. The time Q&A saves in database design will be more than worth the difference in the prices.

Product Details

Product: Memory Mate

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Price: \$119

Product: Q&A

Distributor: PC Extras, G03 The Watertower, Redfern Hill 2016 NSW (02) 319 2155

Price: \$665; upgrade \$120

Product: Reflex

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Enclosed please find cheque/ Purchase order/ Bankcard/ M/C / VISA # _____

for \$ _____ (Remember to add \$4 post or \$8 courier.)

NAME: _____

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If you're self-employed or run your own business, Lewis CROSS-CHEQUE will help keep your accounts in order.

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To help in preparing your tax return, CROSS-CHEQUE prints reports detailing each income and expense category.

You simply enter details directly from cheque butts or deposit slips. Any cheque can be split across several expense accounts. Handles 120 categories of income and expenditure. Allows you to do bank reconciliation.

The latest version of this popular package has dozens of new features, including:

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- Summary reports can be written to a disk file.
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"If ever there was a small software accounting system that could be described as ideal for the very small business, Lewis CROSS-CHEQUE would fit the bill." Dan Lawrence, Your Computer, August 1986.

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Dr Geoffrey Lewis. In 1965 he was selected by IBM to demonstrate the new System 360. He was selected following a sensational score of 150 out of 120 in a university test for mathematical aptitude. He was awarded the extra points for exceptional problem solving ability and in the next ten years nobody else got more than 75 marks. He has applied his problem solving ability in producing four software packages written for Australian conditions.

LETTER MAGIC

Most wordprocessors let you do all forms of word processing: letters, articles, books, price lists, footnotes and computer programs. They become top-heavy with features and hard to operate.

LETTER MAGIC concentrates on only one application, the very important one of writing letters. Your letter automatically starts with the date, name and address of the person you are writing to. Standard letters, paragraphs or phrases are easy to do. Sign-off your letter with one key-stroke.

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"If your primary need for a wordprocessor is letter writing, then Letter Magic is worth your attention, regardless of the word processor you are currently using." Ewart Stronach, Your Computer, December 1987.

DEMO PACKS

Demo packs, which contain the manual and complete program are available at only a fraction of the price. Not just a fancy scrolling display with impressive graphics but the real program. Actually test it out on your own computer! If you like the program you pay the balance of the price. The programs are available for MS/DOS. Available for Macintosh except LETTER MAGIC.

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There are also extra options for:

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For personal use or for business use.

You enter details of your future transactions for receipts and payments. Specify whether the transaction is one-off or recurs every so many weeks or months. Starting with your account balances, CASH FLOW gives your cash position at any point in the future. This helps you make financial decisions, e.g. when to shift funds between cheque and savings accounts.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Computer: _____

Send more info.

Pay-Pack

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Letter Magic

Send demo. pack

\$60

\$36

\$36

\$36

Send full system

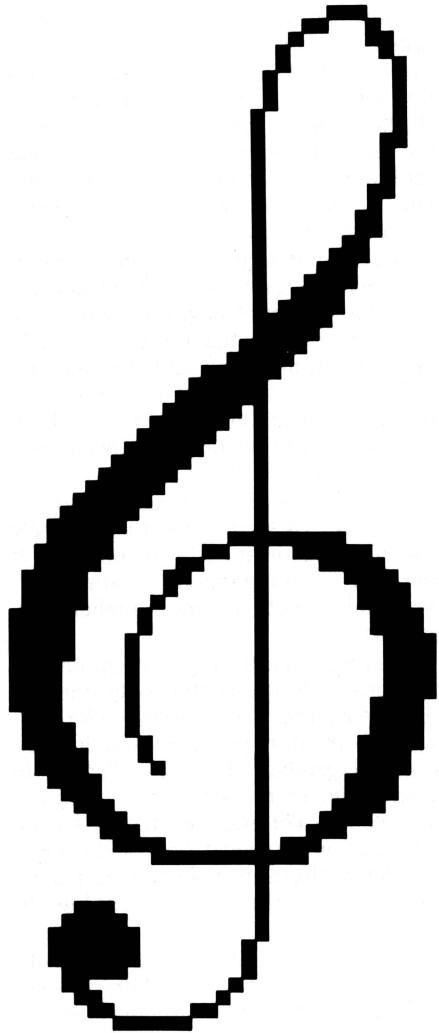
\$990

\$390

\$150

\$490

All prices include sales tax. If paying by Bankcard or Mastercard, include card name, number, expiry date and signature.



In the previous article in this series, we reviewed several options for exchanging a variety of information between MIDI-connected devices using system exclusive (SysEx) code. Virtually the only rule in the original MIDI Specification about SysEx data is that it must start and stop with specified status bytes (F0 and F7 hex, respectively).

The format of intermediate data bytes contained within a SysEx message is not specifically defined within the MIDI Spec. This provides considerable flexibility for defining individual applications and for future MIDI extensions.

Microcomputers, MIDI and Music

Now that we have covered system messages, Andrew Symaniz concentrates on a subject he briefly discussed last month – manufacturer specific SysEx.

Manufacturer specific SysEx

In the case of manufacturer specific SysEx communication, each maker of MIDI equipment can reserve their own ID number – for example, 41 hex is used exclusively for addressing Roland equipment. When this ID byte is transmitted as the second byte of the SysEx header setup (in other words, immediately following the F0 'start sysex' byte) all subsequent data is intended only for that particular manufacturer's range of equipment.

Beyond these minimum requirements, however, manufacturer specific SysEx data and communication protocols can vary markedly from one manufacturer to the next. Formats may also be quite different for other types of equipment made by the same company.

So the inbuilt flexibility of SysEx communications is a double-edged sword. On the negative side, there are few general guidelines for developers to conform to when designing similar applications, or for presenting this information systematically in owners manuals.

Nevertheless, most instrument manufacturers have succeeded in equipping many of their products with a host of SysEx based features. These features include data dump, external parameter editing and a variety of other basic 'set-up' operations – many of which may be controlled remotely from standard MIDI programming devices.

On the other hand, librarian software has a potentially unlimited disk storage capacity and can offer the best compromise between speed, reliability, convenience and price.

More sophisticated sequencers, including Roland's MC-500, for instance, allows users to write their own SysEx code byte by byte – making it possible to insert short SysEx programs into a musical sequence, say, for the real time control of individual patch parameters. In effect, this kind of capability can add an entire set of new performance features to a synthesizer or other MIDI instrument.

In a following article we'll investigate specific SysEx programming examples that enable synthesiser owners to reach in and tweak a given parameter from a computer. For now, let's take a look at the range of commercially available software that relies on SysEx communication.

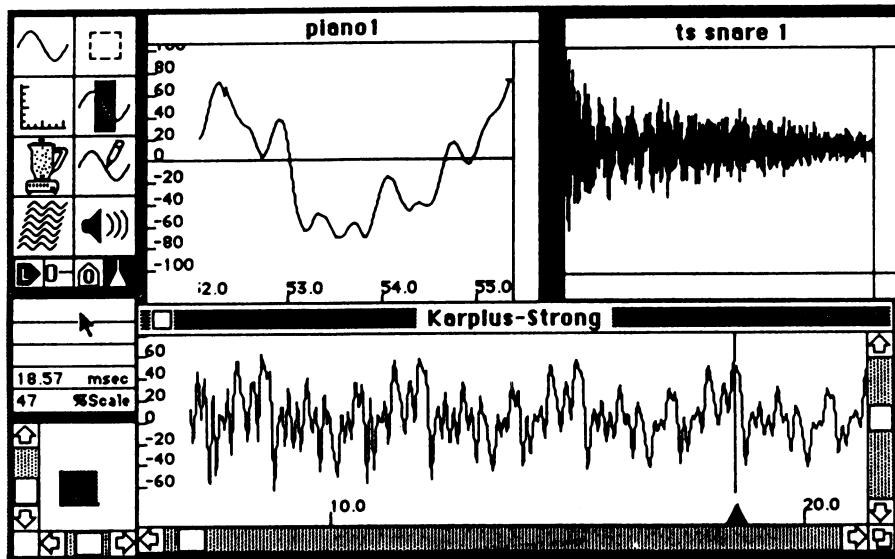


Figure 1. Using multiple windows in Sound Designer, you can look at three different sounds simultaneously. Their displays can be of any configuration.

Librarian software

Initially, the SysEx MIDI option was used mainly by synthesiser manufacturers to provide their instruments with an effective method for storing sound Patch Parameter data; an alternative to either the slow (and often unreliable) cassette dump facility, or the more expensive cartridge methods.

Instrument cartridge packs usually contain battery backed-up RAM or EEPROM to provide fast, non-volatile sound storage. The use of cartridges is certainly more convenient than having to save sounds to tape, however, the typical cost of these cartridges may be as much as \$50 each; and this can work out to be over \$1 per sound patch stored! Not a very economical solution.

On the other hand, librarian software has a potentially unlimited disk storage capacity and can offer the best compromise between speed, reliability, convenience and price. This software may also provide additional utilities for indexing instrument sound patches.

All that is required is a computer loaded with suitable software (usually specific to just a limited range of instruments) and a standard MIDI computer interface. Through this connection, the computer is able to receive, process, store and ultimately regurgitate SysEx data representing the various Parameters and settings of a MIDI-connected device.

Some librarian packages include facilities for the convenient management of stored data. For example, individual patches might be labelled with colourful names for later identification. Patches might be reorganised into sound banks – grouped as percussive sounds, say, or sequentially ordered as banks of sounds that require an easy method for transferral to and from the instrument for live performance.

Other librarian features might include the ability to store information not normally maintained within the patch locations of the instrument itself (for example, the 'function parameters' on the DX7 synthesiser). Some programs may even enable hard copy print-out of stored information such as bank directories, or all the parameter details of individual patches.

Voice editing software

Logical extensions of the original librarian variety of software are integrated voicing/editing packages that enable the musician to create new sounds on keyboard instruments (or modify existing ones) externally from the computer. These programs can process all the SysEx data derived from a patch dump, display individual synth parameter settings graphically on the computer screen, and provide some means for editing them using either the computer or musical keyboard, joy-

stick, mouse or combinations of these techniques.

With older style synthesisers, each sound parameter (oscillator pitch, filter frequency, amplitude level, or whatever) typically had its own separate front panel switch or control. However, the luxury of having all the knobs simultaneously available for creative experimentation is rapidly becoming a convenience of the past. The reason is simply that each additional hardware control featured on a front panel adds proportionately to an instrument's manufacturing costs.

One major design innovation of synthesiser manufacturers in recent years has been the concept of single-key or numeric data entry. In this situation, a single knob, slider or button is assignable to a number of different functions of the instrument – and may be used in conjunction with an on board LCD to set almost every parameter of a sound patch.

While this approach does indeed cut production costs for today's increasingly powerful, multifeatured instruments, it makes sound programming a rather tedious, and sometimes incomprehensible, process.

One problem with single-potentiometer synthesiser design is that only one parameter at a time can be accessed for editing. Also, the front panel of the style of instrument generally bears no discernible relationship to the structure of a given sound patch. For example, despite having a reputation for being one of the most popular synthesisers of all time, Yamaha's DX7 is still considered 'impossible' to program.

Some of the first MIDI musicians to start dissecting SysEx data in order to get at the guts of their machines included the computer hacker's community. Their pioneering efforts reflected a growing need for 'soft instrument' user interfaces that related, more in graphic terms, to programmed sounds.

The subsequent spate of software-based voicing programs have serviced this need remarkably well. At their most basic level, these programs can provide tables of numbers that show the simultaneous display of all parameter values of a connected machine. These parameters maybe presented either all at once on a single screen, or grouped according to function on separate screen pages.

Programs for Yamaha's FM range of synthesisers for example, usually include sub-pages for algorithms, envelope generator settings, and keyboard scaling.

Software written for graphics-intensive computers such as the Macintoshes, Atari STs and so on, can be even more impressive. A mouse-based personal computer makes parameter adjustment very easy – just click on the desired icon and increment or decrement the existing value accordingly.

Of course, the editing process itself will always be pretty much step-by-step, but values and levels can be displayed all at once to resemble the physical layout of a particular synthesiser, or perhaps arranged as rows of rotary pots or vertical sliders, similarly to an audio mixing console.

Moreover, envelope shapes can simply be drawn-in graphically rather than having to be displayed as numerical settings. The graphic presentation of envelope functions is particularly interesting, since in many sound programming situations a picture conveys useful information much more effectively than long lists of numbers. Some programs for the DX7, for instance, can display all eight DX7 envelopes simultaneously in three dimensions, to great effect.

And then there is the window-style approach – which integrates multi-page and single-screen methods.

Typically, sound parameters are presented on-screen as an alternate synthes-

Mouse control and computer keyboard input is one convenient method for editing patch data.

iser 'front panel'. Usually there is a master 'overview' screen that includes special window areas – enabling the user to zoom in for more detailed information, or for accessing related areas of interest.

Window-style voicing programs for the DX7 synthesiser, usually configure the main screen according to the current patch algorithm.

Values for frequency and level may be contained within boxes representing each operator. From here, the user can choose to view envelope data, feedback values and so on, separately for each one.

Mouse control and computer keyboard input is one convenient method for edit-

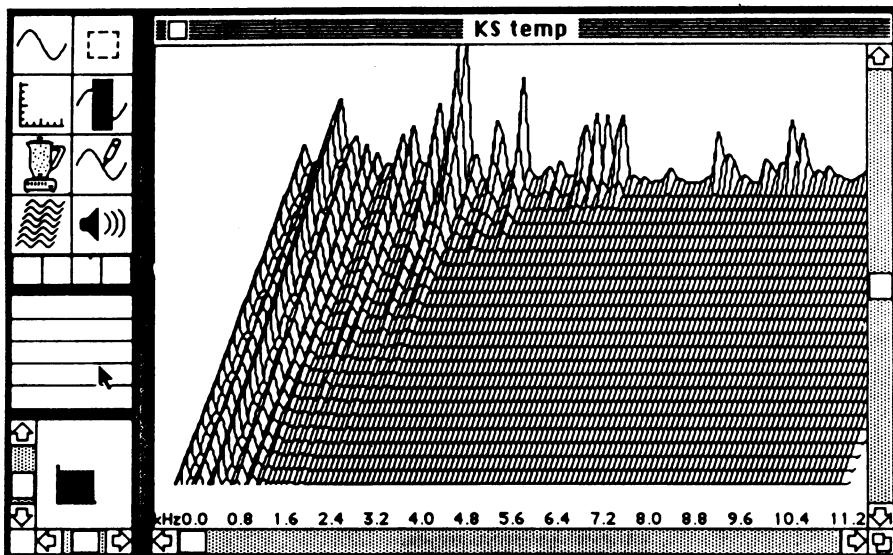


Figure 2. The SDS genre of software enables externally sampled waveforms to be displayed on screen, manipulated in various ways, and then downloaded to other sampling instruments that observe the specific dump request and handshaking routines defined by the Sample Dump Standard.

ing patch data. And real time interaction between instrument and computer enables knowledgeable musicians to change synthesiser parameters via the computer screen – very quickly.

Other methods for updating sound program data also include using the regular controls on the musical instrument. Conversely, some programs allow the musician to select various software functions (say, switching the voicing program to its algorithm page) in response to specified key depressions on the instrument's keyboard. In this situation, the Player's hands need never leave the instrument to alter a sound during a performance.

Already, there is an enormous variety of voicing and librarian software available for virtually every musical synthesiser on the market – Yamaha's DX7's, Casio's CZ series, Roland synthesisers, Oberheim's Sequential Circuits... the list continues to increase each time a new model of instrument is introduced.

Editing software for samplers

But synthesiser parameter editors aside, there are some other amazing possibilities on the horizon for more 'generic' editing programs for sampling instruments – such as the E-mu Emulator II and E-mu SP-12 drum machine, Ensoniq Mirage, Prophet 2000 and others.

Enter the Sample Dump Standard (SDS) – one of the most recent and exciting of MIDI extensions. SDS is associated with the Universal Non Real Time SysEx format shell, which we briefly considered last time.

The original purpose of SDS was to enable the digital transfer of individual *sound samples* between different brands and styles of equipment. The current SDS specification is able to handle sounds with varying sampling frequency (actually measured as the period, in nanoseconds, between consecutive samples), and includes provisions for sustain loop-points, and anywhere from 8-bit to 28-bit sample resolution!

One of the first computer software packages to support on screen access to samples (and their composition) was Digidesign's Sound Designer Program for the Emulator II and Macintosh. The SDS genre of software enables externally sampled waveforms (and in some cases, even waveform data generated by digital synthesis algorithms on the computer) to be displayed on screen, manipulated in various ways, and then downloaded to other sampling instruments that observe the specific dump request and handshaking routines defined by the SDS.

In the next article, we'll 'get down' and inspect the SysEx data stream in more detail. □

INKJET PRINTERS

Hewlett-Packard's DeskJet and PaintJet, Tektronix' 4696, and Kodak's Diconix Portable.

INKJET PRINTERS have been in use for a number of years, but it is only recently that research and development has produced models that have cleaner print heads with fewer maintenance problems. The latest batch even includes a model that does not have to use special ink jet paper for optimum results.

Resolution and colour are two of the most significant factors in printer development. The increasing capabilities of dot matrix printers, and development of desktop laser printers in recent years has meant that printers have kept pace with PC development and software design. Desktop publishing, presentation software, Cad and graphics applications all require a high degree of sophistication when it comes to the final hard copy. Specialists can make use of expensive workstation hardware that produces photographic quality from images on screen. But for the rest of us, the options are more limited.

The resolution of printers is getting better all the time, with 24-pin dot matrix printers and 300 dots per inch (dpi) lasers setting the standards. Inkjet printers have been slower to develop, but with the DeskJet, Hewlett-Packard (H-P) seems to have broken the resolution barrier for these printers (at a reasonable price as well). At 200 dpi, it is not quite laser quality, but as an alternative to a 24-pin dot matrix printer it has no equal for letter quality output. With the advent of computers with colour options such as the Macintosh II, the IBM PS/2 range, the Amigas and the Ataris, there is a demand for good colour output. Colour printing can be achieved quite cheaply using a dot matrix printer that accepts a colour option. But quality of output is not high even with 24-pin models, because of the limits of dot matrix printing.

Look out lasers, here come the inkjets! Recent developments in inkjet technology have produced a new generation of affordable printers with innovative designs.

The advent of four-colour laser printers is something to look forward to, but the expense may make it prohibitive to all but the specialists. This is where inkjets can make headway – they have the advantage of being quiet and lightweight, even portable.

Hewlett-Packard DeskJet

This new printer is the result of substantial research into both inkjet technology and marketing strategy. For under \$2000 you can have near laser quality 200 dpi printing that gives you true letter quality, and you do not even have to use special inkjet paper. The DeskJet is aimed at potential buyers of letter quality dot matrix printers who would rather have a laser but find them too expensive. With the added benefits of quiet operation and convenient design, this new generation inkjet is going to give the high end dot matrix and the laser market something to think about.

It is difficult to tell the difference between a page produced on the DeskJet and one from a laser printer. The only perceptible differences are that the laser prints a slightly denser black, and if you look very, very closely, a tiny amount of bleed can be seen with the naked eye from the page printed on the DeskJet, but it is small enough to be insignificant. Magnified, the amount of spatter surrounding letters is slightly more than that found in a laser output, and the edges of the letters are not quite as sharp. Compared to output from a 24-pin dot matrix, the DeskJet page looks like a page produced on a daisy wheel, with dense, well formed characters.

The DeskJet is a less expensive alternative to a laser printer and gives, to all intents and purposes, an identical output for printing straightforward text and graphics. It differs from lasers in that it is not a page printer, and a document is printed line by line in a similar way to a dot matrix printer, but if you do not need to access the special features of laser printing (such as landscape/portrait and font rotation) and are satisfied with the multiple options that are available with most dot matrix printers, the DeskJet is more than adequate. It is also fairly unobtrusive, being small enough to fit on a desk return and a quiet 44 dBA (rated) when printing.

There are two print modes: Draft at 240 characters per second (cps) and Letter Quality (LQ) at 120 cps. This is not as fast as laser output, but it is quite a respectable speed considering the quality. For comparison, 24-pin dot matrix printers in a similar price bracket print at up to 300 cps Draft, and 100 cps in Letter Quality mode. In Draft mode, the DeskJet prints at 300 x 150 dpi which produces a slightly fainter result whilst retaining the sharp and well formed characters produced in

Quality mode. Bold printing, italics, sub and superscripts, proportional spacing and underlining are all supported. In the printer's standard configuration, the Courier internal typeface is accessible in three sizes. Two slots on the printer's body allow cartridge fonts to be inserted, which provide extra typefaces.

The print cartridge unit consists of both the ink reservoir and the print head. The print head has 50 microscopic nozzles arranged in two rows of 25. This is a development of the 96 dpi, 9-nozzle head of the Thinkjet, and the 180 dpi, 30-nozzle head of the Paintjet. DeskJet cartridges have a life of 400 to 800 pages depending on the page content.

It is no longer necessary to purchase special inkjet paper to get high quality results – a wide range of plain office paper can be used. The print head needs only one 'prime' operation by pushing a button when it is first installed, and after that it is self cleaning and it parks itself in such a way as to avoid ink from drying up and clogging the nozzles. The self-cleaning, self-parking head is suspended vertically above the paper as it prints, so that the actual print head squirts the ink down onto the paper. H-P has achieved this with a revolutionary approach to printer design: the paper is fed in through the base of the printer from the 100-sheet feeder bin. It is moved around three large rollers through 180 degrees and after a few clunks and whirring sounds the top edge emerges on to the flat platen ready for printing to begin. The print head moves back and forth above the paper, printing the text 'upside down'.

Another new feature is the mechanism which suspends the freshly printed page on two rails above the output bin, thus preventing it from smearing the previously printed page. All of these improvements in inkjet printer design address directly the problems that faced users of these printers in the past. In fact, the printer behaved very well during the test period, with no smudges and no trouble with the print head. It only misbehaved a couple of times when it loaded two or three sheets instead of one. Apart from replacing the print cartridge when it runs out of ink, the only maintenance required is periodic cleaning of the platen, carriage guide and paper feed rollers with a soft cloth moistened with water.

Speaking of water, the printed page from the DeskJet is not immune from the effects of a dunking. This is a rather radical test, but in some cases it is so difficult to

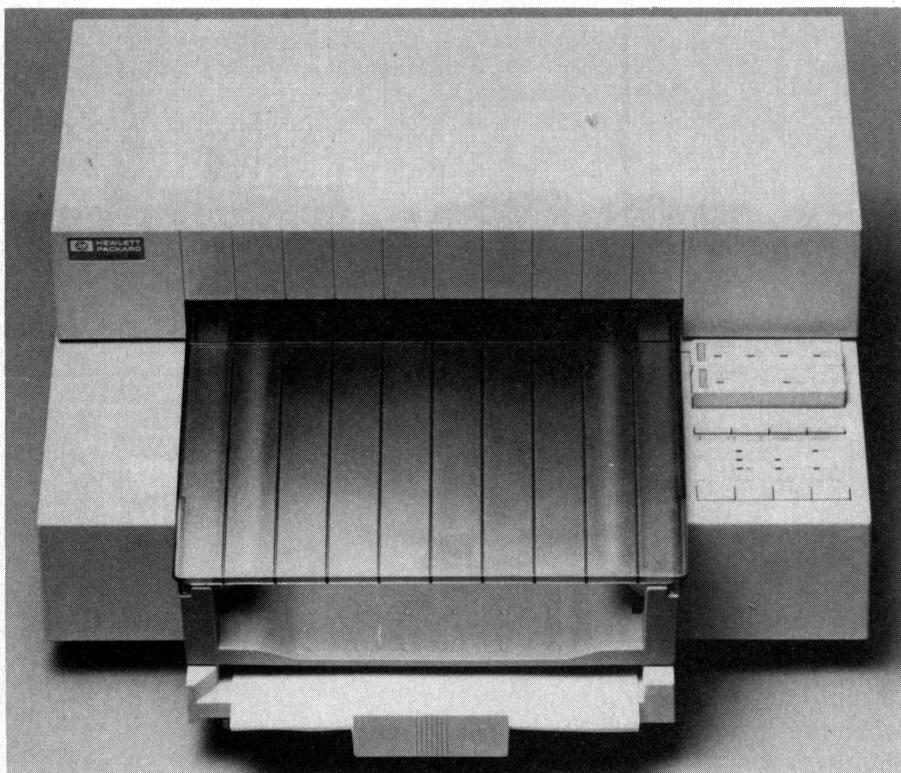


Figure 1. The DeskJet gives true letter quality on plain paper.

My father had a small e of five sons. He sent m fourteen years old, whe myself close to my stud (although I had a very narrow fortune, I was b eminent surgeon in Lond my father now and then them out in learning na mathematics, useful to believed it would be so

DeskJet

My father had a small e of five sons. He sent m fourteen years old, whe myself close to my stud (although I had a very narrow fortune, I was b eminent surgeon in Lond my father now and then them out in learning na mathematics, useful to believed it would be so

Laser printer

Figure 2. It's difficult to tell the difference between a page produced on the DeskJet and one from a laser printer.

tell the difference between a laser output and the DeskJet's that we had to resort to drastic lab conditions. The result of applying water is a smudging of the ink which is water soluble, whereas the laser printed page is more or less immune. But unless you plan on printing in the rain this should not be a problem.

The manual is laid out in a logical way, with step by step instructions that are

easily followed. Details are provided for connecting the printer to H-P, IBM and Apple family computers, and further details are provided on setting up software, using control codes, and making use of the font cartridges. All things considered, the DeskJet is a new force to be reckoned with in the letter quality printer market, and a true alternative to 24 pin dot matrix and laser printers.



Figure 3. The Tektronix 4696 even includes a driver for the Amiga – this 4096-colour, digitized image printed in 4 minutes.



Diconix Portable 150

For anyone who has been used to using a dot matrix printer, with its noisy impact printing mechanism, the Diconix portable is a pleasant surprise. Even before it is taken from its carry bag, it is difficult to believe that something so small and convenient to cart around could print, let alone prove to be useful. But it does in fact perform very well and produces an output that is reasonably fast in draft mode with respectable printing in Near Letter Quality (NLQ) mode.

Much of this printer's appeal comes from its compact size and quality of design. Whoever thought of storing the five rechargeable, C-size batteries inside the platen deserves to be given full member-

Figure 4. Kodak's Diconix 150 Portable – this innovative 12-jet machine runs from batteries stored in the platen.

Figure 5. The state-of-the art, \$14,500 Tektronix 4693D uses thermal wax print technology and sets the standard for colour hard copy with 300 dpi resolution and 16 million colours.

ship to every journo's club in the world. This design means that the mass of the printer is concentrated in the right place, and it makes the unit similar in size and weight to early transistor radios. It can easily be teamed up with a portable laptop computer and carted around in true jet-setting fashion. It can also be conveniently set up on your desk if space is a problem (you can store it inside a desk drawer), and it will quietly and faithfully work as a personal printer.

The Model 150 comes complete with print head, AC adaptor and recharger, operator's manual and some sample paper. The print head is another piece of excellent design, with twelve jets and associated input circuitry occupying a thin rectangular slab in front of the ink reservoir. The disposable head prints 500 pages of text before it has to be replaced. The AC adaptor can be used where a powerpoint is at hand, otherwise the unit will operate on its batteries and will print for a minimum of fifty minutes, or 150 pages at full charge.

Output in Draft mode is 150 cps. There are two NLQ fonts, Quality and Script, which print at 50 cps. Superscript, subscript, condensed and double-strike are also supported. The printer can be configured to emulate either an Epson FX or an IBM Proprinter, which has the extended character set. As with most inkjets, the best quality is obtained by using special paper. Special paper is required because of the tendency of the ink to bleed into the long fibres of normal office bond paper. This makes printouts on bond paper look definitely hairy, and a bit faint. Using the inkjet paper, the print looks a little soft around the edges, but this is acceptable in a printer of this size.

Another simple design solution is the paper feed mechanism: It is simply a matter of lifting the bail arm, inserting the paper into the rear opening until it appears above the platen, and releasing the bail arm.

The 12-jet print head can be instructed via escape sequences to print enhancements such as double strike, super/subscript, underlining and graphics modes. For \$950 you can buy a 24-pin dot matrix printer which would give Letter Quality output, but for portability and quiet operation, you can't go past the Diconix.



Hewlett-Packard PaintJet

The PaintJet is a colour inkjet printer that can print NLQ text at 167 cps and colour graphics with 180 dpi resolution. It takes around forty seconds to produce a page of text, and about four minutes to produce a full page of graphics. It is suited to PC Cad and graphics packages, and can print on special H-P PaintJet paper (either fanfold or cut sheet) and transparency material. Like the other inkjet printers, it is extremely quiet during operation, and technological developments have reduced any maintenance problems to a minimum.

Two disposable ink cartridges (one black, and one cyan, magenta and yellow) are mounted next to each other in a carriage which moves back and forth spraying ink onto the paper. The cartridges have thirty nozzles each, and last for around 1000 pages of black text, and 180 pages of colour graphics. The PaintJet is an earlier development than the DeskJet, and it needs special paper for best results. Its output is not really designed for Letter Quality text, but for presentation graphics that use NLQ text and colour, it does a rather good job. It can also be used in technical applications as a substitute for a colour plotter with Cad software.

Colour printers generally fall into three categories: dot matrix colour, inkjet colour

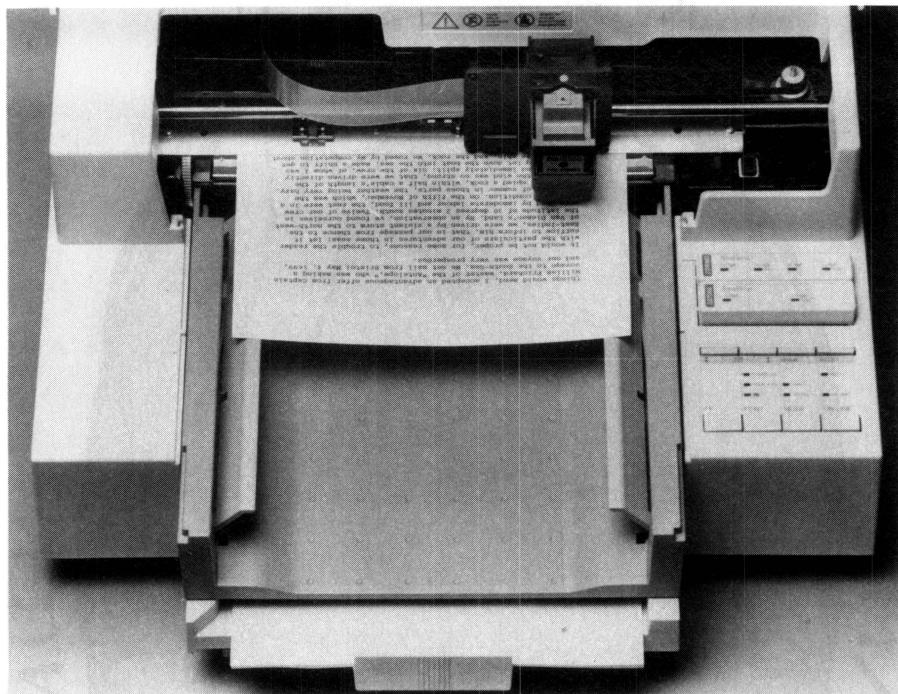


Figure 6. The self-cleaning, self-parking head of the DeskJet is suspended vertically above the paper as it prints. Note the two rails supporting the freshly printed page as it emerges.

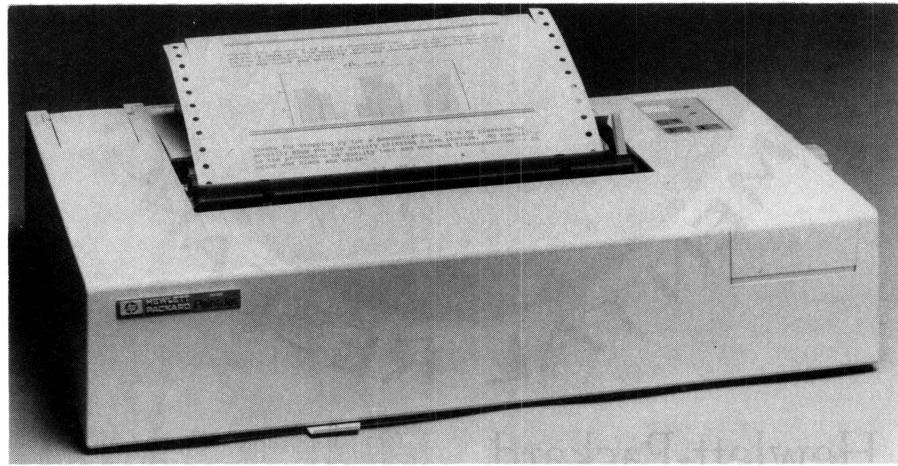


Figure 7. The PaintJet is designed for colour presentation graphics and as a substitute for a plotter with Cad software.

and thermal wax colour. With dot matrix printers, the coloured ink is transferred from a ribbon onto the paper surface through impact of the print head. Because there is a lot of dilution, the colours often have a washed out appearance.

Thermal wax colour is the best available, but it is expensive (around \$14,500 for 300 dpi and 16 million shades of colour). The inkjet uses liquid or solid ink that is either physically squirted on to the page, or heated and forced through a tiny

hole. The thermal wax type is the only one that can approach the quality associated with colour photography. Indeed, if you are looking for a means of transferring a colour image from your PC monitor to hard copy, the best way out is via some sort of photographic process, either using a special colour transparency capture, such as Polaroid Palette, or if your screen resolution is high enough, by photographing the image straight from the screen.

But for the occasional presentation the

PaintJet is possibly all you would need. It prints on to a transparent film without too much bother (as long as you allow the ink to dry properly before you handle it) and on PaintJet paper, it is possible to print solid blocks of colour that do not show the print passes that are obvious from dot matrix printouts. At 180 dpi it is not possible to obtain really sharp edges, and the strongest colours are those that are squirted onto the paper without mixing (black, yellow, cyan, magenta). Optimum results can be obtained by choosing your palette carefully. We used a PaintJet to print out invitations for our Personal Computer of the Year Awards. We managed to go through two and a half colour cartridges printing 350 invitations. Mind you, it took 45 hours of continuous printing to do the job, but the PaintJet performed without a hiccup.

The two ink cartridges are primed when they are first installed, and they are inserted next to each other in a carriage that runs back and forth along the length of the platen. If there is a pause in printing for any reason (for example when the printer is left waiting for information from the computer), the print carriage automatically slides over to the right hand side where it drops into a rest position. This prevents the ink from drying and clogging the jets. We left the PaintJet with the carriage in this rest position for several days to test this feature, and it printed perfectly when we fired it up again.

Paper feed is both friction and sprocket, and the special PaintJet paper is available in cut sheet or fanfold form in A4 size and foolscap. We tried several different papers, without much success, with even the higher quality coated papers showing some bleed. There is a single interface connection with a choice of Centronics parallel, RS 232C, or HP-IB (cables have to be purchased separately). Twelve international character sets can be selected, Courier and Gothic fonts are in residence, and the usual bold, underlining, superscript and subscript are supported.

As mentioned earlier, the technology of the PaintJet has been superseded by the DeskJet, at least as far as text output is concerned. Colour inkjets are still being developed, however, and if H-P manage to produce one with the same resolution and features as the DeskJet, we could see a laser quality colour image on plain paper that will cost a lot less than anything a future laser printer could produce. In the meantime, the PaintJet does a much better job than a colour dot matrix printer, although it is about three times the price of one.

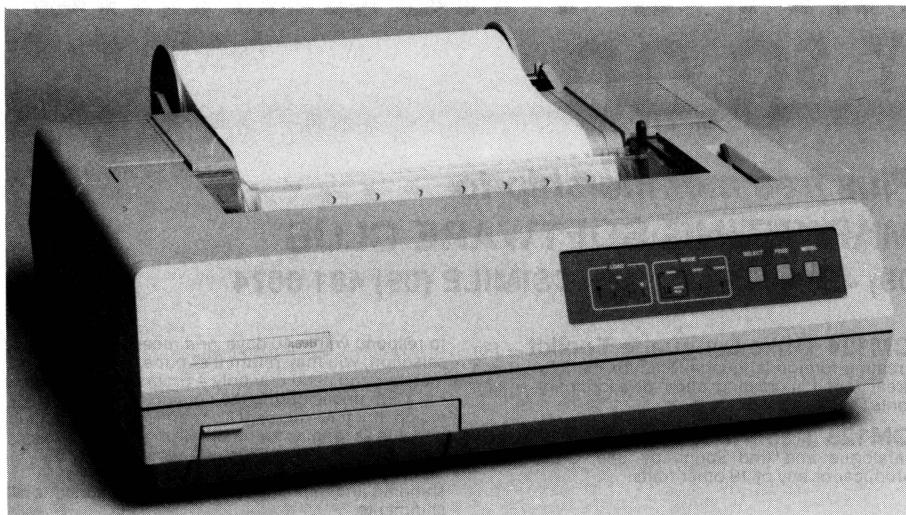


Figure 8. The Tektronix 4696 gives 120 dpi resolution and 125 colours.

Tektronix 4696

Tektronix has set the standard in colour hard copy that is printed (rather than photographed) with its 4693D series of printers and accessories. The standard is a high 300×300 dpi, which is laser resolution, and 16 million colours! The 4693D uses a thermal wax print technology with the print head making up to 4 passes to achieve dense blacks. With a page rate of one per minute, it is not fast, but with 16 million colours, who is complaining? Incidentally, with the Tektronix 4693DS colour rasterizer, it is possible to have the full colour spectrum for printing. This is where colour printing approaches the standards of colour photography, and it costs \$14,500.

There is a less expensive version, the 4696, which is an inkjet printer suitable for use with PCs. It has a lower resolution, 120 dpi, and a range of 125 colours. The 4696 is similar to the PaintJet from H-P, being of a similar size, and with a similar market in mind. There are substantial differences, however, in the ways the two manufacturers have approached problems associated with inkjets. Ink is supplied to the printer in liquid form in transparent cartridges, and is transferred to the printer reservoirs by removing the lids and pressing the end over the cartridge over a corresponding valve. The level of ink in each reservoir is monitored with a status lamp, and when the level drops too far, the ink can be replenished. Each ink cartridge lasts for approximately 100 copies, and costs around \$10.

When the printer is powered down, the ink heads are automatically sealed and

washed. During power up and periodically during printing, a small amount of ink is purged to prevent clogging and to ensure even print quality. Separate cartridges are used for black, cyan, yellow and magenta. While the printer is not printing, the ink carriage rests in a bay at the front left of the printer body. This is where the house-keeping is carried out automatically.

Paper is supplied to the printer either manually or from a roll mounted behind the platen. Transparency material can also be used for overhead projection, and a selection switch is provided at the front control panel for transparency printing. We used Pizazz to print a screen dump of an EGA 640×350 screen from The Magician. Pizazz has three density settings that can be chosen. High Density gives the most saturated results and the straightest lines. A high density dump takes under three minutes, and low density two minutes. In comparison with the PaintJet, the printed product looks slightly more vibrant, but the differences between the two really boil down to personal preference. Some people prefer a less saturated print because the stronger colours are less likely to dominate the blended colours.

The Tektronix did not perform faultlessly, however: Each print from the beginning was marred by small black dots at the same place on the page, as if the platen was marked with ink. We phoned Tektronix, who suggested purging the inks, which we did to no avail. The black ink reservoir light was flashing, so we attempted a refill, but the reservoir was not in fact empty. This seemed to fix the black dots problem, and a print was finally produced in pristine condition.

The manual for the 4696 is quite adequate, giving lots of advice on troubleshooting and accessing the various features of the printer. There is a section on programming and a very useful section that deals with a colour theory, with advice on how to achieve the best results with colour in presentations and graphics. The controls are simple to use, with three buttons and indicators for ink, media, and a ready light to show when the printer can accept information from the host.

One problem with testing inkjets on IBM compatibles is the limitation on colour capabilities from the host. We used an Amiga 1000 to test the Tektronix' capabilities with a 4096-colour digitized image, and it came out fine. Tektronix has provided a printer driver for the 4696 and 4695 to be used on the Amiga. Double buffering increases copy speed, and it can output a full screen dump in around four minutes. Version 1.3 of the AmigaDOS operating system will include much more efficient drivers for several of the inkjet printers, including the PaintJet.

The Tektronix may not be as advanced as the Hewlett-Packard inkjets, but it still produces a very colourful print. In some ways it is more flexible, as it has three graphics print modes selectable via programming commands, or via the front panel. Mode 3 extends the printer's resolution into 120×240 dots per inch giving a more dense output, but it takes twice as long to print. Maintenance has been well thought out, with the printer doing most of the work automatically. For situations requiring a dedicated color printer, the Tektronix 4696 should be adequate. □

Product Details

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Price: Under \$2000 taxed

Product: Diconix 150 Portable
From: Kodak
Distributor: AWA
 (02) 888 9000
Price: \$950 taxed

Product: PaintJet
From: Hewlett-Packard
 (008) 033 821, (02) 888 4414
Price: \$3271 taxed

Product: 4696
From: Tektronix
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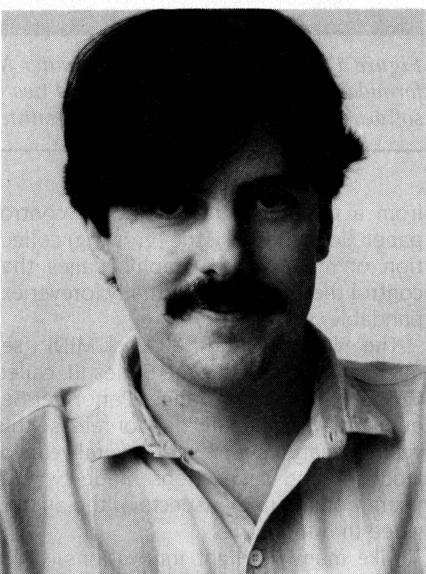
Andrew Symoniz found Fairlight Instruments is not a company to rest on its laurels – co-founders Kim Ryrie and Peter Vogel tell of the audio (and visual!) future . . .

WHEN THE Fairlight Series III Computer Music Instrument (CMI) was completed some time ago, many musicians considered it a formidable beast, even alongside existing CMI machines. But Fairlight Instruments has never been a company to rest even briefly on its laurels.

Now, after almost two years of continuous research and development, a whole swag of new hardware and software upgrades for the Series III seems destined to further this Australian company's worldwide reputation for musical excellence. Not only is this instrument considered the Rolls Royce of sound synthesisers, but it continues to set new standards as the ultimate controlling centrepiece at the heart of any audio/visual production environment.

Recent hardware developments

One product of Fairlight's recent hardware developments is its new-style musical keyboard. Although currently still in prototype form, this multidimensional MIDI-keyboard controller is expected to see light of day mid-to-late '88. Essentially, it will enable musicians to control several different tone parameters, simultaneously, with each finger. Not only will in-



Kim Ryrie (top) and Peter Vogel, co-founders of Fairlight Instruments.

dividual keys on the musical keyboard be able to respond to traditional performance expressions such as note-attack and note-release velocity, they will also be capable of exhibiting various other real-time polyphonic options – including 'displacement' sensitivity and 'pressure' sensitivity.

For performing musicians, these expanded keyboard features will open up a host of new playing techniques. For example, a player will be able to directly control a variety of CMI parameters (such as filter, volume envelope, vibrato or even the 'mix' between two or more voices) not only according to how fast a particular key is initially hit or finally disengaged, but also in response to the intermediate displacement of a key, or according to how hard a key is 'squeezed down' at its end-of-travel (called polyphonic 'after-touch').

Kim Ryrie elaborates: 'The new keyboard incorporates a dedicated 68000 processor, which is sufficiently powerful to monitor the exact locations of each key, all the way down. In this way, the actual position of the key might be used to determine how several voices assigned to a single key might be mixed together, according to specified 'function curves'. So, by continuous movement of a key – up and down – you'll be able to produce some very complex variations in sound, perhaps derived from different sound samples.'

'Of course, this approach would tend to gobble up voice channels and so limit your polyphony – though we never really know how people are going to use these kinds of things, once they're available. All we try to do is make the whole system as flexible as possible – and occasionally what ends up being popular is something we didn't even think of.'

Another enhancement Fairlight researchers have been investigating for some time now, is direct digital recording – made possible by the Series III's SCSI

hardware and potential for massive sound storage. This level of hardware sophistication can provide extremely fast Direct Memory Access (DMA) – or memory-to-memory transfer – between the computer and a variety of storage devices. However, Kim and Peter are not yet willing to commit themselves to any *one* digital recording medium.

At present, they are considering several options; these include high density floppies with data compression, hard disks, optical (WORM) disks, R-DATs or perhaps combinations of these systems.

However, each option has its own set of design problems; synchronised R-DAT drives, for example, are an exciting but very expensive exercise to implement at this stage. Fully erasable optical disks, although working to some degree of success 'in the labs', are not yet commercially available. And in any case, optical disk transfer rates still only run at about a quarter of the rate for hard disks, and require involved error detection and correction procedures – all of which currently limits optical recording to just two tracks at a time.

New software

The recently completed Digital Tape Recorder software which allows the recording/replaying of sounds both directly to and from hard disk, should become available 'very soon'. According to Peter Vogel, this CMI option will be used mainly for extensive digital sound editing: 'Long duration program material (up to 2 hours in length, using the 600 megabyte disk) can be sampled continuously onto disk and any sections picked out and rearranged chronologically according to SMPTE time code.'

'On screen there's a real time display where you can see the waveform running past like on an oscilloscope. Here you can slow down, reverse or stop replay, as on a conventional reel-to-reel tape recorder, but you're also able to cut/paste and so on.'

'This is a non-destructive process – it doesn't actually edit the sound file itself, but it creates a list of pointers for jumping through the file on playback. So if you change your mind about something you can always put it back the way it was, instead of having to make massive backup files.'

Like its predecessors, the Series III CMI continues to be more than just a digital synthesiser or sound recorder. Fairlight has always provided a 'soft' screen-based user interface – in other words an interactive graphics control centre, as distinct



Figure 1. The Fairlight CMI (Computer Musical Instrument) was recognized as a formidable beast when it was released two years ago – the recent release of hardware and software upgrades ensure that it will continue to set standards in audio/visual production.

from a pre-determined hardware control panel. Consequently, the (growing) collection of menu-driven graphic pages that control the system are virtually forever expandable.

The long-awaited 80-track/MIDI sequencing software for the Series III, called CAPS (Composer/Arranger/Performer/Sequencer) will be finally due for release this year. Its features represent several years of feedback and suggestions made by CMI users working in all aspects of the audio/video/film industries.

Like many Fairlight innovations, CAPS is founded on unique philosophical principles – quite different from other sequencing designs, including Fairlight's

own Page R. Most dedicated or PC-based sequencers (for Apples, Commodores, Ataris, IBMs and so on) use a very 'bottom up' kind of approach. Typically, musical notes are entered one bar at a time, then duplicated or transposed across to other sections. In this situation, the musician rarely thinks beyond the bars being operated on. Some composers believe this approach curtails the spontaneity and dynamics fundamental to natural musical expression.

Although many musicians might not feel restricted by these limitations, most professional musos – who usually 'think out' their musical compositions in some detail before sitting down to compose –

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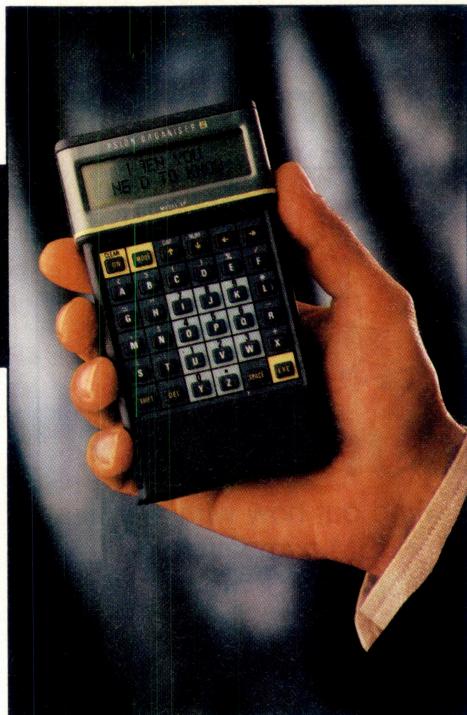
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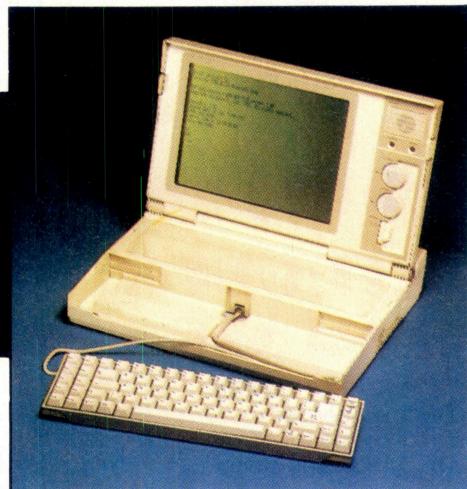
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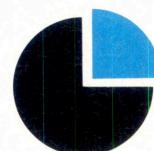
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find these 'experimental inputting' techniques an impediment to their creativity. Furthermore, many traditional musicians have criticised synthesised music in general, claiming it sounds 'cold', 'mechanical' or has a notorious 'computer-like' character. In short, sequenced music, it is claimed, lacks *feeling*.

Whether universally accepted or not, arguments such as these led to the development of CAPS by Michael Carlos – co-designer of the original Page R sequencer. The CAPS system purports to work more in the way a musician thinks; where an entire musical piece can be structured from the 'top down' – like on a composer's score pad.

One important feature of CAPS allows the musician to record a virtually unlimited number of performance 'takes' as the composition evolves. Specified sections can be 'auditioned' and the 'best bits' selected out to be combined into a single error-free performance.

Musical editing procedures such as these closely resemble conventional 'drop-in' techniques traditionally done on analog multi-track tape recorders. However, analog machines always contain a finite number of tracks (usually 4, 8, 16 or 24 tracks), so once a section of music is corrected, the original recording is gone forever. With CAPS, the whole process is non-destructive – you can keep doing 'takes' again and again, and you can always go back and revise previous attempts.

Another CAPS convenience allows 'take' files to contain any number of instrumental tracks – so a whole band of MIDI-equipped musicians can 'jam' together (just like in the good ol' days!) and record the results; but there are other advantages to multi-instrumental recordings. For example, compositions composed on external sequencers can be downloaded into CAPS via MIDI – several tracks at a time, instead of singularly, as is the usual case.

The first version of CAPS is capable of all this, and more. Peter Vogel envisages several future enhancements for CAPS, though most of these are currently undergoing development.

'Having established a flexible sequencing arrangement, there's enormous potential there for doing artificial intelligence operations,' he claims.

'The first release of CAPS has all the 'hooks' to put in a variety of style-modifying parameters (involving, for example, variations in note timing, amplitude, attack, decay). In subsequent releases of

CAPS, the musician will be able to superimpose their own styles onto any piece of recorded music.'

'Some sequencers from other manufacturers have started to dabble around the edges of, say, making available variables which allow you to specify different 'feels' on the performance – syncopations, shuffles and so on. But we're intending to take these ideas much further – so that the musician will be able to actually *program* in a variety of their own individual styles – skeletal structures, if you like – that modify the performance of the notes in individual melodies.'

'In this way, musicians should be able to 'tell' their sequencer 'I've changed my mind about this style, syncopate it like the time before last', rather than having to go through and laboriously change all of the timings of all of the notes in every pattern,' he said.

Fairlight Instruments

IN DEC. '87, Andrew Symaniz told of the foundation of Fairlight Instruments and its first CMI. He followed that up in Jan. '88 with a look at the development of Fairlight's Series III CMI. If you'd like copies of these articles, refer to the Services page.

If you'd like to know more about Fairlight Instruments and its products, contact them at 15 Boundary Street, Rushcutters Bay 2011 NSW; (02) 331 6333.

'Of course, these effects will be reversible, so the composition could be played back again, using an entirely different stylistic set.'

'The basic style-modifying parameters will be 'deviation from theoretical-ideal' characteristics. Some sequencers already put in 'slop' controls where you can provide a random 'looseness' on playback. But the problem with that is that human playing is never 'random'. It's certainly not accurate, but it's not random either. In other words, the 'deviation from theoretical-ideal' is by no means just a noise function. It's a real function, and that's what gives different people unique playing styles.'

'Automated composition is another area that we're looking at, but those sorts of programs that automatically 'jam' – where you can select bits out and so on – are really more of novelty values. Great for hobbyists, but less interesting to musicians who want to express their own preconceived musical ideas. The whole process has to be controlled; and in particular, under the musician's control.'

The future: audio

In the longer term, Fairlight is hoping to do more integration of audio and video production equipment – new generation workstation systems – that promote the creative manipulation of both image and sound from a common user interface. Some of the processing hardware that will be incorporated in Fairlight's future products will be things like DSP (Digital Signal Processing) chips and transputers.

'We've been hanging off the digital signal processing side of things until recently, because DSP chips really haven't been worth the trouble. In the past, they were pretty difficult to program, and limited in what they could do – and very expensive,' Peter said.

'We did experiment about three to four years ago with the first Texas Instruments TMS320s and the successors of those. We were interested at the time, but not particularly excited – so we put them on the 'back burner' until recently, when Motorola announced the 56000 Series DSPs. Now, several other companies are bringing out a new generation of DSP which is quite a different ball game. The whole architecture, speed, number of bits they work with internally, parallel pipelining structure and so on, are quite different. Also, the programmability and the program space available is much larger, and now these are starting to look they'll be more useful.'

'We've got one of the first DSP 56000 development systems in the world here, which we are currently tinkering with. We are nowhere near a prototype of a product yet – we're just evaluating and trying out different algorithms – synthesis, reverb and processing algorithms – just to see how they perform.'

'At the moment they're not really viable for a product anyhow, because the cost is so prohibitive – they're about 600 to 700 dollars apiece for the chips – and to do anything serious with them we'll need a large number. You can't do the sorts of things that we're talking about doing, with just one chip. You'll need maybe 16, or 64, or 128 of them. Once the chips come down to the \$20 region, then it becomes viable – and no doubt within a couple of years they will. Of course, by that time, we'll have quite a bit of software under our belts,' he said.

'I don't think there's any question that in five years time DSPs will be used for almost everything in the audio field, and that we will finally be able to see the end of all the analog filters and analog electronics.'

'Although, of course, that all relies on having the digital equipment to go with it – it's no good having digital input and output equalisers if you've then got to go through A to Ds and back through D to As into conventional tape recorders, or whatever. By the time these products are an economic reality, R-Dats and other digital recording equipment will be commonplace, and everything will come together with digital interfacing rather than analog.'

The future: video

Work has already begun on the development of the Fairlight Computer Video Instrument (CVI) Series II – a (relatively) low cost broadcast quality video production unit.

According to Peter Vogel Fairlight is looking at using transputers for its video products.

'Animation, (as distinct from real time image processing) involves data-intensive computations that, by and large, would be non real time, no matter what you do. Using transputers, you can do animation a lot quicker. Instead of ten minutes of calculation per frame, it can be more like one minute a frame. They're very good for that sort of thing, but they're of very little benefit in audio applications. In the CVI, the use of transputers will be purely to make the thing work faster,' he said.

'These interests (CMI and CVI) are all converging, in that people who were once musicians and didn't think much about video are now thinking visually. Similarly, people who were once video producers and didn't spend much time thinking about sound are now getting into music and sound effects. We're in a very fortunate position in that we have experience in both those markets, and our audio and video products are conceptually similar.'

'I think that there's no lack of creativity in the users' mind – the audio or video artist already has the ideas, but if those ideas could be put into reality as fast as they can think of them, then there would be an abundant leap in creative output.'

'As future technology changes, our products should approach more towards the real time end. Faster and easier – and, of course be able to do all of the things people will want to do. So, if the artist says 'I want this sound to do this, and I want the picture to do that, the system should be able to do whatever it is they can think of,' Peter said.

Kim believes that video will be given a huge boost in the near future by the new high-resolution VHS format. (400 line

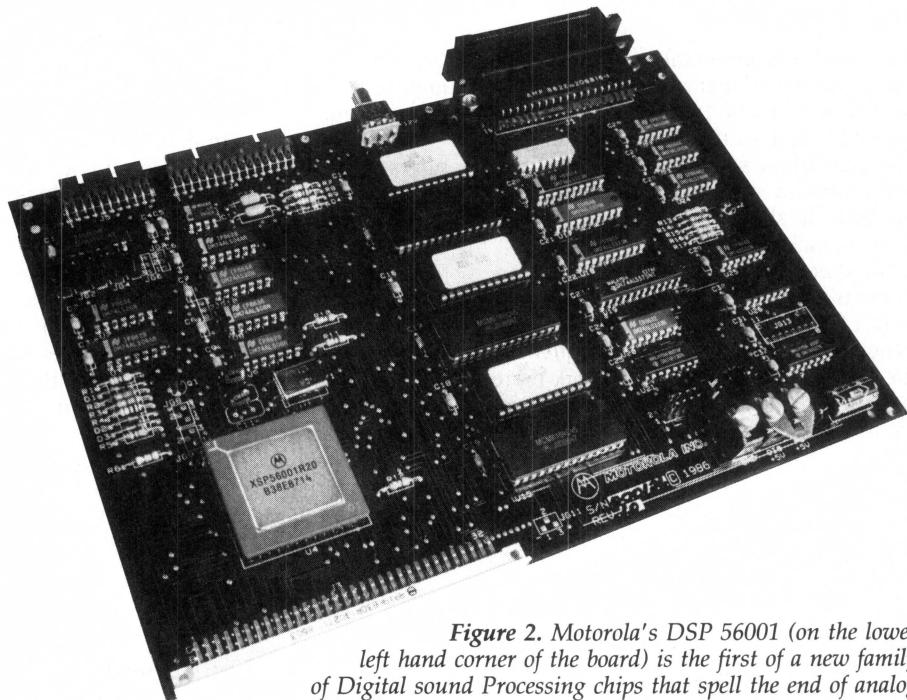


Figure 2. Motorola's DSP 56001 (on the lower left hand corner of the board) is the first of a new family of Digital sound Processing chips that spell the end of analog electronics in music.

resolution on VHS – the present resolution of VHS is around 170 lines.)

'That resolution is near broadcast quality on 1/2 inch tape. And these machines, available later this year, I'm told, cost only about three times more than existing hi fi VHS machines. So you'll have something which is better performance than U-Matic for a lot less price.'

'Also, high density charged coupled lenses coming out in cameras will mean relatively inexpensive video cameras with much higher resolution. This, I think, is going to cause the video enthusiast/semi-professional market to boom. And that's really the market that our CVI is aimed at.'

'I think what's going to happen is that we're going to have a similar situation to what's now happened already in the music industry. Ten years ago if you wanted to make an album, you had to find, say, \$10,000 and go into EMI studios and make your album. Nowadays you can set up a reasonably professional home studio for under \$10,000, and consequently produce a piece of music for much less than that,' he said.

'Of course, video is obviously going to take a little longer, because the technology is inherently more expensive and difficult. But this year and next year, I believe, is going to be the turning point – whereby it is going to become quite feasible to do high-quality video productions and music/videos, or video albums in a home type of environment.'

'Once that market gets established, then you'll probably find organisations such as videotape libraries getting involved in distribution of video products; or alternatively, you might find the record shops getting more involved in music video. In the States, of course, what will happen is those sort of programs will go out on cable to a large degree. But all this, I think, is going to radically change our whole social situation.'

For the past ten years Fairlight Instruments has been aiming to reduce studio production time as much as possible – and this they have done very successfully with the CMI. They have taken a process which used to be enormously expensive and laborious to composers and arrangers with rooms full of sound synthesising/recording equipment, down to something quite manageable.

However, Fairlight's recent explorations and examination of 'stylistic' elements in music may well (possibly in retrospect, 10 years from now) mark the beginnings of a new generation of computer aided composition equipment. Soon, we may all bear witness to instruments that can quantify, and even *interpret* the more 'emotional' and 'human qualities' of musical communication.

Not long ago, studio recording engineers and record producers needed to remind their artists that there was no such thing as a 'feel' knob on the mixdown console. But in a way, now there can be. □

IT — Ideal Terminal

Steven Spielberg gave us ET for communication with extraterrestrials. Sid Morris, a director of AMSEC, describes IT for communications in this world.

IDEAL TERMINAL, or IT for short, is a Shareware product written by Don Harbaugh of California and available from PC-SIG's Australian Distributor, Manaccomm. Before jumping into a description of this I want to describe a conversation I had with a colleague.

He had just got a program from a friend and asked for my help to get it running as he had no documentation for it. I told him that he had no right to use the program as it sold for \$300 and what he had should be regarded as stolen property. He was surprised. He insisted that it wasn't stolen as it wasn't copyright. What he really meant was that it wasn't copy protected. He had confused the two. I told him that he should regard all software as copyrighted. Aha... he was now certain that I was wrong. He went for the jugular with the question: what about Public Domain software? Wrong again I said (You may have guessed that I love being right!) Public Domain and user-supported (or Shareware) software is copyright too.

Enough of this... let's get down to business. IT is a terminal emulation program. Specifically it emulates Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) VT-100 and VT-52 terminals. You can use it, as I do, on a PC which is directly connected to a mainframe or connected via a modem. You need an IBM PC, XT, or AT compatible with a monochrome or colour graphics display adapter and DOS 2.0 or later.

IT is a Shareware product and so is inexpensive. While it does not have all of the features of a commercial product such as SmarTerm 240, it is still a very nice product. From time to time I do use it in preference to a commercial product. Why? Because IT is a very small package. Sometimes I want to log onto a VAX, start a job and return to DOS to do another job there. Often as not the job I want to do in DOS is run a typesetting package called TeX (a fantastic package... but that's another story). However, TeX is a very greedy program requiring about 500 kilobytes of RAM. SmarTerm uses much more than 140

Kbyte of my 640 Kbyte of RAM, so I cannot run TeX on my PC at the same time. But IT uses only about 35 Kbyte, so I am free to use TeX or other RAM greedy packages. Being small, IT is also very fast to load.

The IT disk comes with five files on it. IT.EXE is the program. IT.DOC is a 25 page user's guide. IT.HLP provides on-line help — a very welcome feature. IT.SET is the set-up file which tells IT.EXE what kind of terminal emulation you desire. IT.DIR is a file for phone numbers used for automatic dialling with a Hayes command modem. You are meant to edit the last two files with an ASCII output word processor.

The manual

The manual is well-written and set out. I had no trouble understanding it. It is also easy to look up something you are uncertain about.

Of course, the keyboard of an IBM PC is not the same as that of a DEC VT-100. I don't mean just the layout, but also the range of keys themselves. Therefore I had to decide which IBM key will be used for each VT-100 key. Many of the choices are natural. For example, the IBM PC delete key is used for the VT-100 delete key. The IBM PC Scroll Lock key, also labelled Break, is used to emulate the VT-100 break key. But some choices appear less obvious: the PrtSc key is used to emulate the keypad comma.

IT can be used to send or receive files using the error-checking protocols Kermit or Xmodem. If these are not available on the mainframe then files can be sent in ASCII form.

The baud rates available are 300, 1200, 2400, 4800, and 9600. The choice is, of course, made in the set-up file, IT.SET. The manual states that both tone and pulse dialling are supported, but I have not confirmed this myself.

Pressing the Alt key and typing H calls up the on-line help. Screen capture is done by pressing Alt and typing P (for 'Put'). Unfortunately only 3 screens can be saved. If you try to capture a fourth it over-

writes the first one. Alt together with E allows you to execute a DOS command. Finally Alt-X is used to exit IT. It is worth remembering that neither Ctrl-C nor Ctrl-Break can be used to exit IT.

You don't expect a small product like IT to come with macro capability, but it does. You can assign a string of up to 80 characters to any or all of the ten keys Alt-0 to Alt-9. You can also define a string that IT will send to the modem each time you type Alt-D. These macros are included in your IT.SET file.

Do I like IT? When I got it, I put it in my computer's drive A, did a DIR A:, saw that the only EXE file was called IT, so I typed IT. Within a few seconds I was logged onto a VAX 11/780. Without changing the set-up in the distributed disk I logged onto a VAX 8800 and then a Pyramid running Unix. Each operation was trouble-free. At that time I decided IT was great. I haven't changed my mind since. It will never replace my SmarTerm 240, which is a sophisticated and refined product, but IT will remain on my hard disk and be used quite often. □

Product Details

Product: Ideal Terminal

From: Public Domain

Distributor: Manaccomm, PO Box 381, Pennant Hills 2120 NSW

(02) 875 3538 or Viatel *49000#

Price: PC-SIG #79

\$13 plus \$5 postage and handling

AMSEC

THIS REVIEW was written by AMSEC director Sid Morris, who is Professor and Head of the Department of Mathematics, Statistics and Computing Science at the University of New England. AMSEC is a Melbourne based software evaluation group with consultants in the workplace, in primary and secondary schools and in various tertiary institutions around Australia. AMSEC may be contacted at PO Box 140, Hurstbridge 3099 Victoria.

XTreePro

– a second generation file management utility

Chris Allen discovered that XTreePro is even bigger on functionality and has more to offer than its predecessor, XTree . . .

XTREE is one of the more popular disk utilities around. For several years people have been using XTree to manipulate the files on their disks (usually hard disks) without having to remember or bother with a variety of DOS commands. XTree made the task of organising your computer much easier. Times change – the typical 'power user' of two years ago looks rather meek today. Now XTree has changed or rather a new version has appeared, XTreePro.

As you would expect, XTreePro presents a higher degree of functionality than its forebear. Old features have been improved and new features have been added, all of which is exactly what one would expect in a new version. The question is, have the changes been implemented well and is the new version value for money?

The answer appears to be a good sized *yes* on both counts. The first thing you notice is that XTreePro is much faster to initiate, at least twice as fast as XTree. Of course after using Pro for a while you forget the speed improvement and wonder why it couldn't be instantaneous. The next thing you notice is the subtle change in the command line. Some new goodies have appeared. These include commands to allow the logging of multiple drives, manipulation of files between drives and greater flexibility with files in different directories. And at no extra cost, they include IWord which is not a single word but in fact a WordStar compatible editor (which is being used to write this

article). So much for the headlines, now the fine print.

Unlike XTree, XTreePro requires installation before it can be effectively used. This is a straight forward procedure initiated by typing INSTALL at the A: prompt. This starts a program which calls a program called XTPROCFG.EXE, which can be executed any time you wish to alter the initial setup or default parameters. This ability to customize the default settings is a feature of XTreePro. For most users the installation procedure is simply followed with no trick questions involved.

To start XTreePro enter XTPRO – this brings up the opening screen which has hardly changed compared to XTree. Users of XTree will have no trouble adapting to XTreePro as it is in the most part the same. The Return key still enables you to change between various file areas and, as before, it is the options on the command line which enable you to actually do something. The new commands –

Edit edits ASCII or WordStar files using IWord. Commands to move the cursor, mark and manipulate blocks of text and search and replace characters are all

Path: C:\UTIL\XTRPRO			
C:\			FILE: *.*
GALLERY			DISK: C:
SCANGAL			Available
SER_DEMO			Bytes: 8,052,736
TBASIC			DISK Statistics
TEMP			Total
TMAST			Files: 846
UTIL			Bytes: 12,283,042
XTRPRO			Matching
WORD			Files: 846
WS2000			Bytes: 12,283,042
WYSE			Tagged
			Files: 0
			Bytes: 0
			Current Directory
			XTRPRO
			Bytes: 220,004
INSTALLED .COM XTPRO .X01 XTPRO .X30			
README .DOC XTPRO .X02 XTPRO .X40			
SNAPSHOT.COM XTPRO .X10 XTPRO .X50			
XTPRO .COM XTPRO .X20 XTPROCFG.EXE			
XTreePro (tm) Version 1.0 Serial # 105274			

Figure 1. While XTreePro's opening screen will be familiar to XTree users, there are new features which include commands to allow the logging of multiple drives, manipulation of files between drives and greater flexibility with files in different directories.

WordStar compatible. File handling and some of the onscreen functions also appear very familiar. The menu layout is different but with the aid of some online help the whole process is quite straightforward. This is fortunate as the manual is particularly vague on this subject. While !Word is functionally compatible with WordStar, it doesn't have all the features of WordStar (which is why it's described as an 'editor' rather than a 'word processor').

As far as I can tell (using only the manual as a guide) !Word has no provision for different types of printers and no equivalent of the dot commands in WordStar. Useful features are the ability to strip the high bits from the file (making a WordStar format into an ASCII format) and the ability to program the function keys with any !Word command sequence or ASCII characters.

The first thing you notice is that XTreePro is much faster to initiate, at least twice as fast as XTree.

Global will show all files which match the filespec on all directories on all logged drives. Up to 26 logical drives may be logged at any one time. This is obviously useful on systems that have several drives or partitions. Most commands utilise this extra access in the expected way, the copy command in particular utilises the multiple logging of drives in a slightly different manner. When copying to another area the window for the target area may be viewed and switched to other areas. View now supports three ways of looking at a file (instead of two ways in XTree). Normal is the straight ASCII perspective. Hex will show the hexadecimal values for every character in the file and Unformatted will provide an 80 column ASCII display. This is helpful as certain types of files don't reveal much in the normal view, Microsoft Word files being one example. There are also three options which work in conjunction with the view command. The M option is a toggle on the display of high bits in the file. WordStar files, for example, do not use the high bit and some characters will appear particularly strange when viewed (or TYPEd) as an ASCII file. The S option will set one of ten place markers

for the current position in the file. By using the G option you can instantly view that section of text marked with the place markers.

These new commands enhance the usefulness of the utility but the changes don't stop there. The structure of XTree has been subtly reworked into a more consistent 'intuitive' interface. For example, instead of using F2, F1 will call up a series of context sensitive help screens (The help function is fast becoming the defacto standard use for F1). The Esc key will cancel any operation in progress (instead of F3). The F2 function key will display a destination directory window when doing a COPY or MOVE operation.

Bypassing DOS

XTreePro can also be more substantially and readily configured than XTree. The home directory, colour combination and display type can all be configured as defaults along with quite a few other features. As mentioned previously, XTreePro boots up much faster than its forebear. This is because XTreePro bypasses DOS function calls to do the job. This may not be desirable if you have some utility which intercepts access to DOS function calls, so XTreePro allows you to configure it either way.

The Sort Order parameter indicates the default order in which files will be displayed on the screen such as: Name, Ex-

Esc cancel	
1Word Block Delete File Help Menu Options Search Time Use the other 1Word menus (commands are grouped by keypress)	
***** XTreePro VERSION 1.0 RELEASE NOTES *****	
This file contains the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Initial procedures o A list of files on the distribution disk o Notes about XTreePro customization o Additions and corrections to the manual o Notes to current XTREE users o Tips on using XTreePro o Procedures for reporting problems 	
***** BEFORE USING XTreePro *****	
Before you attempt to use XTreePro, you should do the following: Figure 2. XTreePro includes a WordStar-like editor 1Word (shown 'editing' the program's release notes).	
XTreePro Path File/Directory Limit Disk Logging Method Display Type Display is "flicker free" Audible Error Indicator Directory Display Highlight Bar Keep Filespec File Display Format Filename Separator Small File Window Access System and Hidden File Access Sort Criteria Sort Order Printer Redirection Print Form Length Return to Main Menu Set the path where XtreePro support files are stored. Select Item ENTER Change Item	

Figure 3. XTreePro's main configuration screen.

tension, Date, Size or Unsorted. The ability to change the sort order on the fly is still retained. When a directory is selected by pressing Return in the opening menu, a smaller intermediate window appears displaying the files within that directory. Pressing Return once more brings up the large file display window. If you don't like the small file display window you can configure XTreePro to bypass it.

A sensible option for new users is the optional limitation on hidden files. The system can be configured to allow the display but *not* the modification of these files. If you really need to alter or erase a hidden file it can be done through DOS or by reconfiguring XTreePro. Either way you're unlikely to erase the DOS system files on your system by accident. Several other options; from Audible Error Indicator to Printer Redirection may be configured as defaults. Most of these options can be overridden/defined with switches in conjunction with the XTree command; for example: XTPRO /P60/2 will call up XTreePro with a printer page definition of 60 lines to a page and a two column file display.

Help

If you do need assistance with any of these features there are two sources available to you, the online help and the manual. The manual is about three times the size of the XTree manual though it certainly doesn't contain three times the information. In general it is quite adequate except in the area dealing with the text editor 1Word. Some WordStar experience is helpful if you want to use 1Word to its limits.

XTreePro has all the functionality of XTree plus a number of useful additions. The program is straightforward in operation – XTree users will need only a glance at the manual to cover the new features.

XTree is still available; there is an upgrade path between the two products and considering the price difference between the two the upgrade charge seems quite reasonable. If you are already an XTree user and could use the extra features, then it's not a bad way to go. □

Product Details

Product: XTreePro
From: Executive Systems USA
Distributor: Perfect Interface, 8 West St, Nth Sydney 2060 NSW (02) 957 112
Price: \$245 taxed, \$65 Upgrade

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HANGMAN

This may be the ultimate version of Hangman. As AMSEC consultant Sian Smith reports, if you're into word games this Public Domain program may well be the last word!

HANGMAN IS ONE OF the classic paper and pencil games. Any child above the age of seven or eight, and anyone who ever was a child, has doubtless whiled away rainy afternoons with it or surreptitiously played it under the desk in school. As with most games that have survived over the years, this is a game that teaches while it entertains.

Now from Norland Software we have Hangman updated for the computer literate kids of today. It's still a great game, whether you play it the old cheap pencil and paper way or on the computer. This computer software offers you four different versions of the game: Basic, Educational, Literate and Personalized and two skill levels at which to play, that greatly enhances its ability to maintain your interest.

In Basic Hangman the object is to guess a secret word, letter by letter, before you are hanged. Every wrong guess means another part of your body is added to the gallows. On the screen you will see the gallows (waiting for you), the alphabet above it and the word to be guessed indicated by a series of lines. When a letter is chosen, it will either be inserted into the mystery word or will cause a part of the body to be hanged. Too many errors and the poor unfortunate swings again. If you guess the word before this happens, the

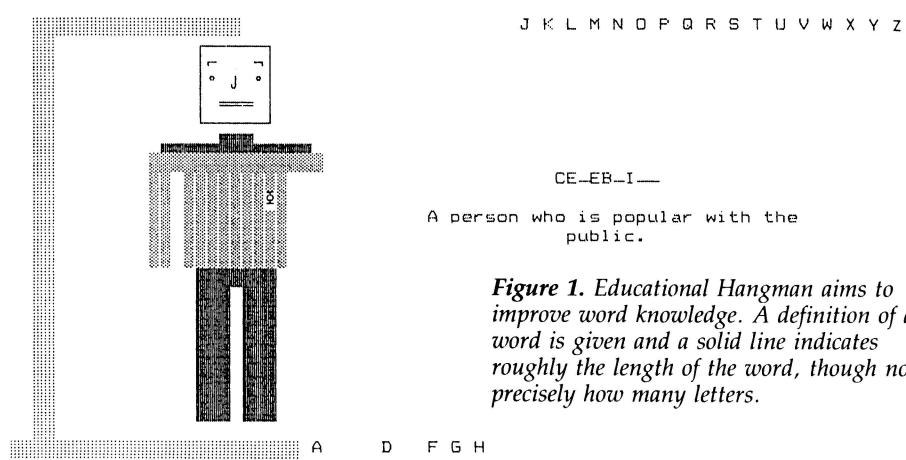


Figure 1. Educational Hangman aims to improve word knowledge. A definition of a word is given and a solid line indicates roughly the length of the word, though not precisely how many letters.

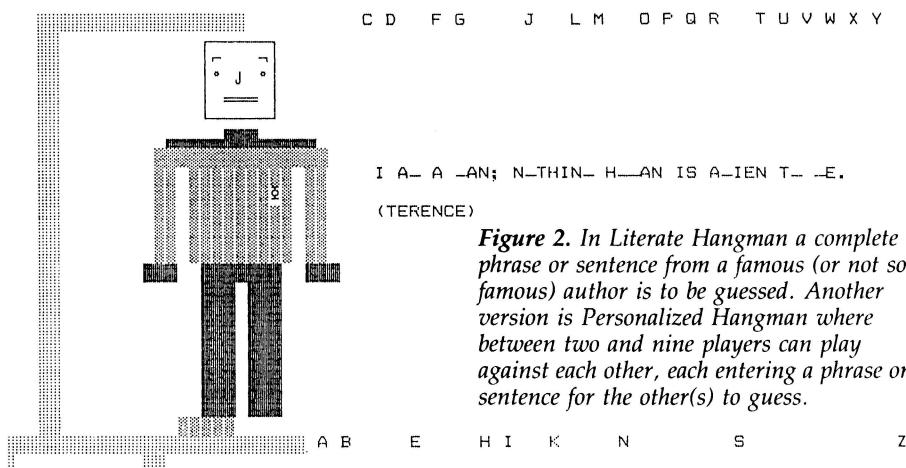


Figure 2. In Literate Hangman a complete phrase or sentence from a famous (or not so famous) author is to be guessed. Another version is Personalized Hangman where between two and nine players can play against each other, each entering a phrase or sentence for the other(s) to guess.

orchestra breaks out joyfully and a message such as 'Simply marvellous!' or 'Smashing job!' appears on the screen, guaranteeing a glow of pleasure from the person playing.

AMSEC

THIS REVIEW was written by AMSEC consultant Sian Smith. AMSEC is a Melbourne based software evaluation group with consultants in the workplace, in primary and secondary schools and in various tertiary institutions around Australia. AMSEC may be contacted at PO Box 140, Hurstbridge 3099 Vic.

Educational Hangman aims to improve word knowledge and so the element of guesswork is removed. A definition of a word is given and a solid line indicates roughly the length of the word, though not precisely how many letters. The words are aimed at children of primary school age, varying from definitions as easy as 'The favorite food of the Giant Panda' or 'A small open container frequently found in the company of saucers' to 'A type of hawk with a sharp, hooked beak, and long claws' (buzzard) and 'The largest state in the United States', which I suspect not many Australian children would know is Alaska. There are about 300 words in

Educational Hangman but, importantly, the program chooses the starting point in the list of definitions randomly, so it should be some time before the list is known word perfect.

The next variation of the game is Literate Hangman where a complete phrase or sentence from a famous (or not so famous) author is to be guessed. When playing this version you have to press the key for each occurrence of that letter in the phrase. That is, if there are eight 'e's then 'e' must be pressed eight times. The program contains about 200 quotes ranging from nursery rhymes such as 'Little Miss Muffet sat on a tuffet' to Einstein, 'I never think of the future. It comes soon enough.'; not to mention such 'famous' writers as Franklin P. Jones, 'Originality is the art of concealing your source' and Clement C. Moore, "'Twas the night before Christmas ...'. Very few of the quotes would be familiar to children, apart from the nursery rhymes.

The last version is Personalized Hangman where between two and nine players can play against each other, each entering a phrase or sentence for the other(s) to guess. This enables the player to escape from getting overly familiar with the

phrases on the Literate Hangman program and also enables children to use phrases to suit their own ability level. Any game which encourages interaction is preferable to solitary activities, especially if it's to be used in a family or school setting.

Once a player starts to feel a bit *blase* about each of the different versions it is time to change the level of play from 'amateur' to 'expert'. This means that instead of being allowed nine errors before being hanged, only five errors are allowed. Alternatively, or if you're a real masochist, as well, you can play against the clock. The combination is fairly deadly. The time allowed for guessing a word seems to vary, from 35 seconds for a seven-letter word to 24 seconds for an eight-letter word or 22 seconds for a four-letter word. Guessing a word against the clock successfully seems to involve hitting as many keys as possible in the shortest possible time. If you try to stop to think, the clock will probably beat you.

The other variables in these games are the sounds and the orchestra, either or both of which can be switched off if you find that they irritate you. The orchestra is entertaining – at first – but it does slow

down the rate at which you can play, so in the long term you will probably find that you prefer to play with the orchestra 'on break'. The graphics are fine, with the hanged figure changing his expression in appropriate ways, and there is plenty of variety in the musical accompaniments, most of which children will recognize.

If you have an IBM JX, PC, XT or AT or compatible (colour or monochrome monitor) and children in the age range of about six to twelve, this is an excellent piece of Public Domain software. Michael (aged seven) says 'It's a very good game'. An enhanced version called Hangman for the Super Intelligent is available directly from the author in the USA. □

Product Details

Product: Hangman
From: Norland Software
Distributor: Manacom, PO Box 381, Pennant Hills 2120 NSW
 (02) 875 3538
 Viatel *49000
Price: PC-SIG Disk 153
 \$13 each plus \$5 postage and handling for any number of disks.



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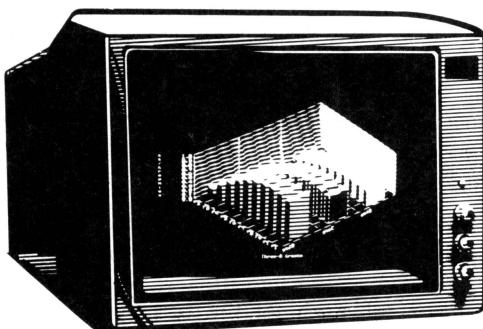
System 2: 640K memory, dual disk drives, monitor and keyboard. Cat X-8061 **\$1395**

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Amstrad's PPC 512 and PPC 640 Portables

Laptops are no longer a novelty – witness the latest offerings from Amstrad that impoverished hack Ewart Stronach tested at his Yacht Club!

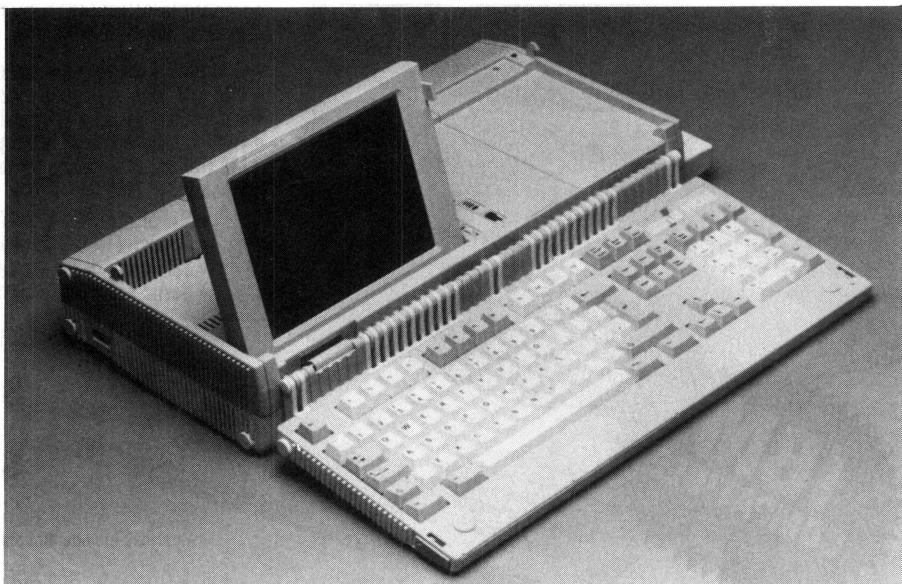
IT'S NOT LONG ago when to have a lap big enough to hold an MS-DOS computer, complete with twin disk drives, built in modem, full size keyboard and LCD screen you would have to be at least two axe handles hip to hip. Laptop computers are no longer the novelty they used to be but suddenly they are cheap enough to be available to those who can use them best (students, impoverished hack journalists...).

Amstrad broke new ground with the release of its MS-DOS capable computer some time ago and it was great value then. Its most recent additions to the range are two *genuine* portables, the PPC 512 and 640.

Both machines are about the size of a very thick keyboard with a carry handle protruding from the narrow end. The unit is placed flat down on your lap or desk and the top hinges open toward you. The top becomes the keyboard and reveals the LCD screen which hinges up to any required angle for viewing. There are two control knobs, one two-position switch and three LEDs visible on the base and the single or twin disks are three 1/2 inch units mounted above the carry handle.

Power is available from ten size C batteries, mains adapter (supplied) or from a car cigarette lighter (adapter supplied). The control knobs alter the brightness of the display and the volume of the speaker, the LCDs indicate which disk is active, which display is active and power on/off. The switch selects battery off/extension on.

The whole kit is supplied in an attractive nylon carry bag with pockets for all accessories and a robust shoulder strap. The unit weighs 5.4 kilograms, packed into its case with power supply and documents.



The keyboard

The unit supplied for the test was the 'full house' PPC 640 – the 640 kilobytes RAM, twin disk, inbuilt modem variant. The modem connection lives under a slip cover on the top of the open unit (the external appearance of both units is identical, but the 512 has, naturally enough, 512K of RAM). The keyboard is a standard AT style layout with separate cursor control keys, number pad and 12 function keys.

The only visible difference to a normal keyboard is the addition of the letters ALT GR on the right hand Alt key which is used in conjunction with the scroll lock key to switch between the LCD screen and an optionally connected video monitor. The keyboard is pleasant to use but I prefer a

Figure 1. The PPC 640 and 512 are identical in appearance (except for the badge). The unit is placed flat down on your lap or desk and the top hinges open toward you, becoming the keyboard. The supertwist LCD screen is 'infinitely adjustable' and quite easy to read outdoors.

two tone beige keyboard to the two tone grey supplied. The black writing on the darker, non alphanumeric, keys is a little hard to read in adverse light conditions. The keys are firm with a barely audible click and nice tactile feedback.

So much for the looks, how does it work? Opening a flipdown panel along the back of the base reveals a full set of ports. There is a serial, parallel and video port, which require no explanation and two ex-

pansion ports, for connection to an external hard disk device. There is also a DIN plug which will accept the Amstrad monitor with its builtin power supply and a single socket for the mains adapter or cigarette lighter adapter. A set of dip switches allow selection of internal monitor (LCD) or CGA or mono external monitor as default power on devices. The final port is for the connection of a telephone hand piece for use in conjunction with the modem. The test machine was fitted with a British Standard phone jack, but our friends at Amstrad had patched in an Australian jack as a temporary measure. So... open your school bags, children, take out your Amstrads, open the lid, prop up the screen and on the count of three, I want you all to switch on and start computing.

Up and running

The first message displayed on powerup is 'Please wait'. After POST (Power On Self Test) is completed, the Amstrad signs on with a description of the model, in this case Amstrad Portable PC 640K (V1.8) and a request to set time and date and fit new batteries. The system clock relies on the same batteries as the computer and in the absence of such batteries tends to forget which day it is. I would rather see a small self contained battery for this purpose as in many instances it would be possible to be without batteries in the machine for some time.

The batteries may be changed with the optional DC adapter in use without disturbing the system clock. If a system disk is not in drive A, you are prompted to fit one and press any key. From there on it's standard MS-DOS Version 3.3 with the additional opening message displayed informing you that the scroll lock key on, use of the right hand Alt key will toggle the LCD contrast, and use of the right hand Ctrl key will toggle between the LCD and any optional VDU connected. It is not possible to have both displays showing at the same time.

The disks are standard 3½ inch floppies, formatted to 720 Kbyte and I had no trouble reading disks made on other similar machines. This is good news, as Amstrad in the past has supplied machines with odd sized 3¼ inch disks which are rapidly becoming hard to get.

Screen test

As with most portable machines, the display is a limiting factor. Amstrad has chosen to stay with a supertwist LCD screen, no longer at the forefront of such technology but totally acceptable and obviously part of the overall economics of



Figure 2. Both machines are supplied with a robust nylon carry bag with pockets for all accessories and a robust shoulder strap. The unit weighs 5.4 kilograms, packed into its case with power supply and documents.

placing such a computer in the market at such a reasonable price. As with most such screens, the angle of viewing is critical and the background light affects the readability. I took the test unit to the Yacht Club, expecting the screen to be hard to read out of doors and was pleasantly surprised to find that it performed very well in those conditions. In my computer room at night, background light bulbs produce an 'halo' effect on the screen and care must be taken in selecting the viewing angle and intensity.

There is no doubt that whenever the unit is in use at its home base, most users would elect to use a standard monitor. The display adapter in the Amstrad allows output to both a mono screen or CGA colour screen. I have connected it to all types of screen from a bottom line green

screen to a Multisync EGA screen with excellent results.

The LCD screen has quite a long decay time which means that characters displayed on the screen tend to hang about a bit before fading away. A problem common to high intensity green screens and of no great importance in most applications. I found no compatibility problems with any of the commercial software I tried. Amstrad supplied a copy of Lotus 1-2-3 and a copy of SuperCalc4, both of which worked just fine. The software supplied at the price includes DOS 3.3, a program called PPC Organizer and in the case of the PPC 640, a communications package called Mirror. 'No Basic', I hear you cry, and you'd be right: no Basic!

The PPC Organizer comes with its own 30 page instruction booklet and describes

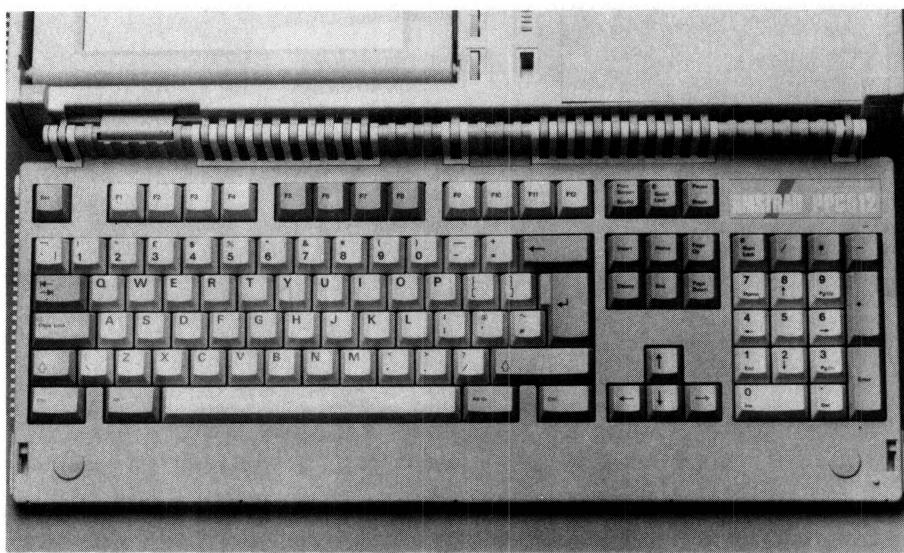


Figure 3. The keyboard is a standard AT style layout with separate cursor control keys, numeric pad and 12 function keys. The right hand Alt key is used in conjunction with Scroll Lock to switch between the LCD screen and an external monitor.

itself as an 'Electronic Information File designed to increase your productivity'. It resembles SideKick in as much is it a TSR (Terminate but Stay Resident) style of program which disappears from your screen while you don't need it but may be recalled without disturbing your forefront task later.

The front screen displays the time and date on a top line and a boxed menu in the top right of your screen. The menu offers: Diary, Word Processor, New address and card file, Search for data, Calculator, Templates and Exit. A function key bar displays the appropriate function key activity along the bottom line. A respectable few seconds elapses after initiation before Organizer decides you are a dummy and provides an automatic Help menu. Items from the main menu may be selected by moving the highlight bar with the cursor keys or hitting the first letter of the desired subject. The first task is to personalise your program by telling it who you are and it will use this information later to automatically sign memos and letters.

Now is perhaps not the time to fully review a piece of software, so a brief description only of its functions will suffice. The pop-up calculator is recalled from anywhere within the Organizer by use of the F3 key. The Diary starts by displaying the month set by the system date with the current day in highlight. The cursor keys allow movement of this highlight around the calendar. A very short note may be entered (up to six characters) simply by

typing directly to the display at this time. A further list of Diary options lurks behind the F10 key and offers: New entries, Show entries (for current date), Find entries, Go to current date and Month Detail.

Entries may be made into the notepad and automatically form part of the database which may be searched for linked entries. Any data in the database may be found with the Diary Notes Find function which allows a fairly quick search by limiting the range to a set period of time such as a week, fortnight, month, year or the entire database. If you remembered you had an appointment with Montmorency Fotherington-Smythe some time next month, a search on any of the names, for a one month period would display the appropriate calendar with the date in highlight, ready for your display of the associated notes. Repeat data may be cut and pasted through the diary to save typing time for regularly used entries.

The Cardfile offers Address Cards and General Cards and the data once entered may be cross referenced to any other category or rapidly searched on any word or phrase. The Address function follows the British postal formula, requesting Counties rather than States and Post rather than Post Code. Fortunately it's not xenophobic and you may use these fields as you like. The card file could become quite large and I imagine search times would lengthen but it would be quite handy to have on board. The ability to search through all your suppliers for a product

simply by typing in the type of product would be of great assistance to those of us with bad whatisnames.

A dialer capable of storing all the commands needed to originate a phone call may be set up with ease. This includes the ability to dial in-house sequences needed to get an outside line, pauses to wait for an old fashioned switchboard, and all possible STD/ISD combinations. The facility to set up communication parameters such as baud rates, parity and so on may also be included. With the telephone connected to your Amstrad, a call to Great Aunt Agatha in Tanganyika is a single command away.

The word processor is most basic, but totally adequate for most documents. A template may be set up using the @ symbol which will search an existing card file and replace the data it finds. For example, selecting an existing customer's card file and marrying it with a document is as simple as typing –

@contact
@position
@address

Dear @dear @day @month @year

and finishing with –

@system.

The card file will be searched and the corresponding data replaced in your text and the letter signed with your name. The word processor is capable of importing ASCII or WordStar files and includes a find and replace function. It appears to be short in the cut and paste department and certainly won't replace your current main word processing program.

A directory called Services exists which allows you to set up the program for your needs. Here I found the answer to my main dislike of the word processor which appeared as a small window on the main screen. The window may be sized and moved with this utility, printer parameters set, the time allowed before help screens appear, the time between automatic saves determined, the audible alarm volume and tone adjusted and video output selected. An alarm function is also accessible from this menu and results in an audible alarm and display of your preselected message.

The other main piece of software supplied is the part of the *raison d'être* of port-

able machines. It is called Mirror, I understand after a court case over its uncanny resemblance to another communications program, and is a menu driven package capable of setting up a communication link with just about anything. Its resemblance to Crosstalk would make it familiar to most bulletin board users, and the wide range of baud rates available from the built-in modem makes it very versatile.

Those of you who need this sort of communication package on a portable machine will already be familiar with the protocols demanded. Those of you who have never been exposed to this wonder of the technical age, consider the ability to communicate with your office computer from any phone point in the world! Letters may be sent, order placed, uprisings organised and dismissals arranged from the safety of 1000 kilometers away.

The learning curve with any communication program is flat but most users lock into one style of contact and save all the parameters for quick, single key stroke operation. Most bulletin boards operate on at least 1200 baud today and all your entry requirements such as identification and passwords can be preprogrammed into Mirror for simple use.

The innards

Do we take a look inside without a Swiss watchmaker offering assistance? Indeed we might – indeed we had to. Whilst reaching over the back of the Amstrad to change a monitor plug, I accidentally knocked out the mains adapter plug which dropped across the RS232 plug. Smoke escaped, which is *not a good sign*. Disassembling the beast is fairly easy but not a job for the faint hearted. Six screws on the underside, two hidden in the battery compartment, allow you to release the base and with a certain amount of prying at little plastic lugs, the essential workin's are exposed. From there, things get a bit complicated; there's not a lot of room and all available space has been utilised.

The main PC boards are stacked one above the other with the modem hanging out to the side of the top board. Connection between the boards is by way of an 80-pin connector with no flexible link. The base board is screwed to the chassis and the top board plugs into it directly. The keyboard has a short flexible cable as do the disk drives. The architecture is unlike any I have seen and certainly bears no resemblance to a 'normal' PC. There are significant numbers of VLSI chips and virtually no chips are socketed.

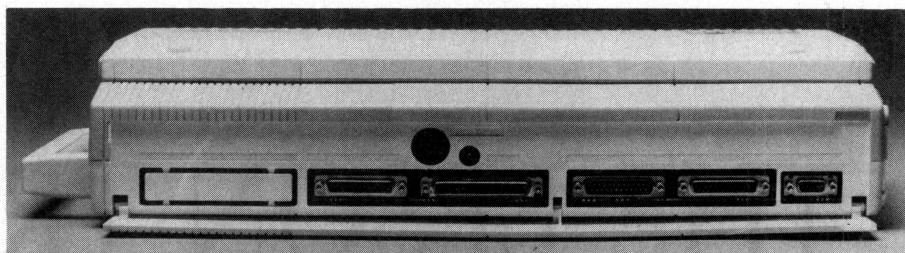


Figure 4. Opening a flipdown panel along the back of the base reveals a serial, parallel and video port and two expansion ports for connection to an external hard disk device. There is also a DIN plug and a set of dip switches.

While stripped to this level, the SED (Smoke Emitting Diode) was located and replaced and I would be grateful if none of you would mention this to Mr Amstrad. There appears (and I may be wrong) to be no provision for hard disk control on the motherboard and I suspect that an add on hard disk would need external control from one of the expansion busses.

Documentation

Documentation is concise and plentiful. It does not follow the convention of a user manual and separate DOS manual but rather leads gently through a description of the hardware, setting up the physical and then straight into an very well written description of what a disk is, how to handle it, how to load it then how to use DOS to organise it. There is a completely indexed DOS manual inherent in the documentation with clear workable examples of the DOS commands.

A section of the manual deals specifically with setting up your modem and running the Mirror software. I said before that your first excursion into modem communication can be a little daunting but the examples in the manual will assist greatly. There are many references to British Prestel systems which operate to all intents and purposes the same as our Videotext.

Appendices in the manual deal with installing third party software, what programs should be compatible and what you should do with those which don't appear to work. The indication from the manual is that anything written for MS-DOS, configured to either a mono screen or CGA screen should work on your Amstrad.

Transferring files from existing full size disks can be accomplished by tacking two computers together along the RS232 port and using the modem program to control the exchange of data. The manual is about the size of a paperback novel and as clearly written as I have ever seen.

Amstrad seem keen to fill whatever gap develops in the market and to this end I am assured by the local lads that upgrades in whatever form required should appear in short order. The modem card may be added to a basic machine; it is extremely good value as a stand alone modem with the same capability costs twice the price. The expansion box, not yet available in Australia, offers the hard disk control plus a row of normal expansion slots for practically anything you would add to a 'normal' PC. This would limit the portability but could be detached easily.

The roundup

Critical comments: very few. It would be nice to be able to detach the keyboard. Although designated a laptop, there would be occasions where it would be better to have unit on a desk in front of you and the keyboard only on your lap.

I ate the colour Mr Amstrad, it's 'orrible. Why not get right up to date and offer it in a range of fashion colours? Yes Sir, the pink goes wonderfully with your bloodshot eyes...

The decision to run on normal C cells rather than nicad rechargeable batteries seems unwise as the battery life is expected to be only about six hours of disk extensive use. All in all, another price and practicality leader from Amstrad. □

Product Details

Product: Amstrad PPC 512 and PPC 640

From: Amstrad Australia
19A Boundary St, Rushcutters Bay,
Sydney 2011 NSW
(02) 360 3144

Price: PPC 512; 512 Kbyte RAM, single drive \$1099, dual drive \$1499;
PPC 640; 640 Kbyte RAM, single drive \$1399, dual drive \$1799;
Modem card; \$499

All prices taxed.

THE EPSON TRIFECTA

- the LQ 850, LQ 1050 and LQ 500

John Hepworth has taken to betting on trifectas – Epson not Epsom . . .

THE HUMBLE dot matrix printer has come a long way in the last few years. The improvement was a response to user demands, but it has also created demands for output of higher and higher quality. The advent of 24-pin print heads made it possible to get genuine letter quality output from an economical printer, and can, at the same time, vary fonts and type size on the run.

One of the first of the 24-pin printers was Epson's LQ 1500, a good, middle of the road, wide carriage, 24-pin, dot matrix printer. It has now gone, but Epson continues to offer a range of 24-pin printers and accessories. The LQ 500 has a narrow carriage, and is aimed at the home and small business user with intermittent printing needs. The LQ 850 and LQ 1050 are high end printers, of greater performance and designed for heavier duty. The LQ 850 has a narrow carriage and the LQ 1050 a wide carriage, but they are otherwise the same.

LQ 1050 and LQ 850

The LQ 850 and LQ 1050 are identical except for one thing – width. The LQ 850 takes paper up to about 250 mm, while the LQ 1050 can handle paper up to 400 mm wide. Both are as small as it is reasonably possible to make a machine handling such paper size, and still have speed and strength. They are 360 mm deep, 140 high and 430 (or 605) wide. The LQ 850 weighs 9 kg, and the LQ 1050 weighs 12 kg.

A welcome addition to the LQ 850 and LQ 1050 is Paper Parking. Both are fitted with a push tractor unit (a pull tractor is available as an option), and a manual sin-

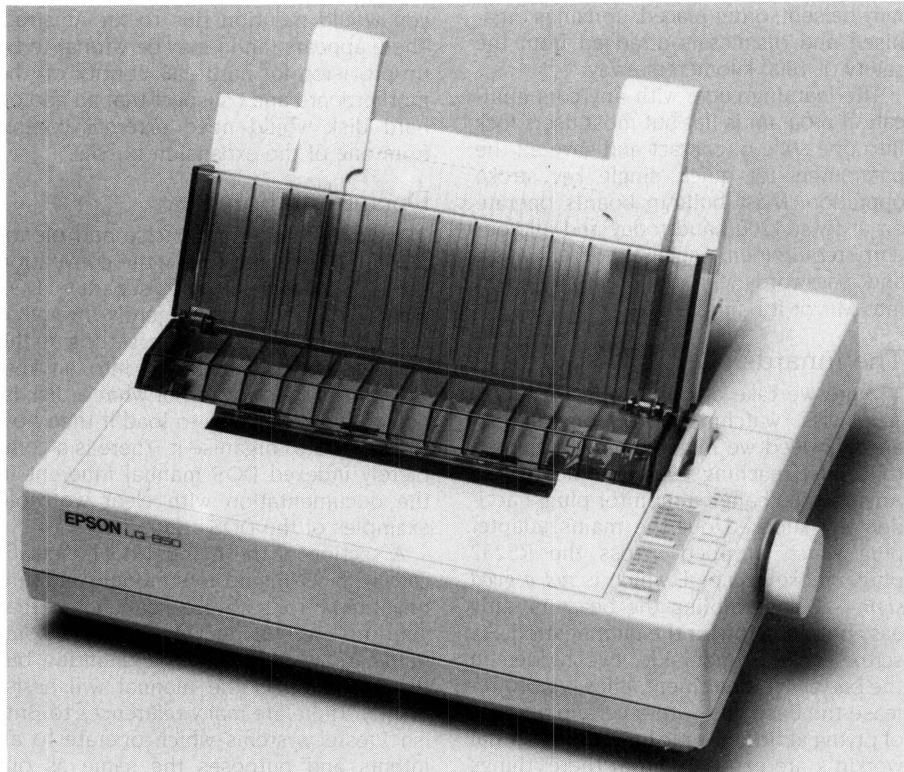


Figure 1. The LQ 850 (shown here) takes paper up to 250 mm wide, while the almost identical LQ 1050 takes paper up to 400 mm wide.

gle sheet feeder is also fitted. By pressing a button, the fanfold paper can be ejected and rolls back out of the printer to allow the feeding of envelopes or single sheets.

Pressing the same button again reloads the fanfold to the exact top of page every time. The position can be adjusted, and is remembered by the machine even when switched off. As paper feeds, the bail that holds it against the platen is automatically opened and closed as required, and

Erorr!

WITH subeditorial enthusiasm for Epson's LQ500 in our May issue, we declared 'this new 9-pin offering . . . gives 24-pin quality . . .'. As was clearly stated in the opening paragraph of Robert Thirlwell's review, what we meant was '24-pin quality, at a 9-pin price.' Our apologies to Epson, and to any readers who may have been confused by the misleading introduction to the article.

an auxiliary set of pinch rollers above the bail maintains tension around the platen. When using multipart forms the optional pull tractor is used to ensure registration of the various layers.

The packages contained the main printer unit, well packed for safe transport, and a number of attachments. These included a paper guide for attachment to rear of machine when using fanfold paper, a manual single sheet feeder, platen knob, power cord, and three manuals.

At the front nothing can be seen except the nameplate. The left side has the power switch and the right side has the platen knob and the cover for the slots for the optional font cartridges. On the rear panel are the power inlet, the Centronics parallel input, and a round serial port connector. There is room for either a 25-pin or 9-pin D type connector, so the adoption of yet another connector seems unnecessary. The serial port is RS 232, and other optional interfaces are available. Also on the rear are DIP switches for configuring the system defaults, and the cooling fan.

On the top is the lever to engage or release the platen pinch rollers, and which also serves to select fanfold or single sheet feed. There is also a control panel with various indicator lights, and buttons for on-line/off-line, font selection, form feed, line feed, load/eject, pitch (10/12/15/ps) and condensed.

Both machines worked well, with good speed and relatively low noise. Print quality was very good, with well shaped letters and good density. One of my few dislikes with Epsons (and common to printers from many other makers) is that they use a ribbon in a case which spans the whole machine, and has a long length up unsupported ribbon across the long case opening. While this works satisfactorily, it is fiddly and can be dirty to replace.

Rated speed is 73 characters per second in draft mode at 10 pitch, and 220 characters per second in Near Letter Quality (NLO) mode, again at 10 pitch. Line feed speed, according to the manual, is 60 milliseconds per line. I ran a 9000 odd character document through the printers as part of my testing, and calculated the time it should take if the above speeds were achieved. The actual times were around 10 per cent longer than calculated, and as rated speeds are 'burst' speeds and not continuous, this is not unreasonable.

LQ500

The LQ 500 is an entry level machine, software compatible with the rest of the new LQ line. It has the same print quality at a slightly slower speed. It uses far more plastic in its construction, but is clearly strong enough for the typical home and small business. In the package are the main printer unit, manual single sheet feeder, a replacement front cover for use when the manual feeder is fitted, a paper rest for support of incoming fanfold and a spiral bound manual. The standard pull tractor unit is a pin wheel type and not the caterpillar tractor type. In use it fed reliably, but my experience in the past indicates that pin wheel tractors require more careful alignment of incoming fanfold, and less tension on the fanfold, than caterpillar tractor units can tolerate.

The main unit is 390 mm wide, 320 deep and 139 high, and weighs 7 kg. Across the front, nothing is seen bar the nameplate. The power switch is towards the rear on the left side. On the right side is the platen knob and the cover over a bin for the single slot for optional font cartridges. The two configuration DIP switches are also in this bin. The rear had only the Centronics socket for the parallel interface and a power inlet socket. A serial input is not on the standard unit.

On the top are the lever for the platen

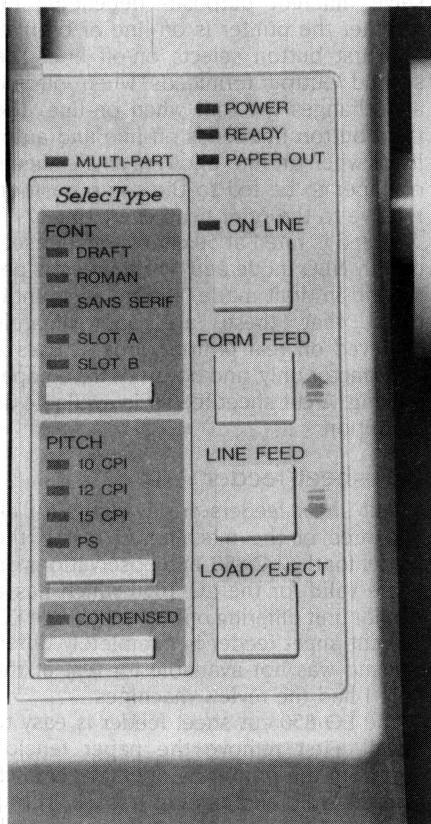


Figure 2. The control panel for the LQ 850 and LQ 1050 – note the three standard fonts and four pitches.

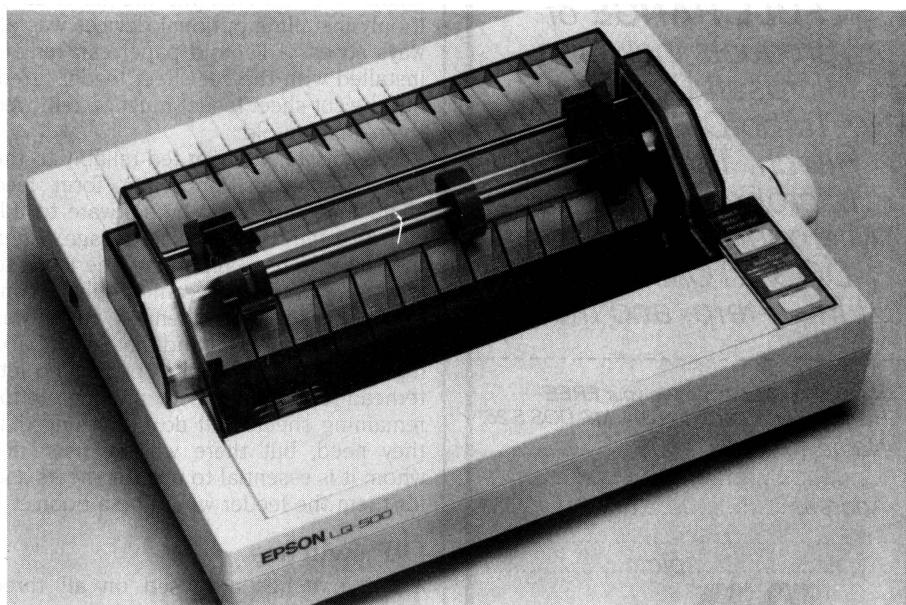


Figure 3. The LQ 500 is an entry level machine with the same print quality as the rest of the range, but at a slightly slower speed.

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PERIPHERALS • PRINTERS

pinch rollers and three buttons. These serve different purposes depending on whether the printer is on-line or off-line. The first button selects on/off line. The second button formfeeds when off-line and changes the font when on-line. The third button line feeds off-line and auto-loads when on-line, allowing single sheets of paper to be fed to the same position relative to the print head every time.

Speed is rated at 50 characters per second in NLQ mode and 150 characters per second in draft mode, and my tests indicated that these are approximately achieved on real printing jobs. It uses a pull tractor only, and does not have paper parking. A cut sheet feeder is available as an option.

Cut sheet feeder

Cut sheet feeders are available for all three of the machines. I tested the feeder for the LQ 850, and observations on it are valid for the LQ 1050 which has a similar unit differing only in width. The LQ 500 cut sheet feeder is completely different and was not available for test at the time I had the review machines.

The LQ 850 cut sheet feeder is easy to install. First remove the paper tension unit from the printer by operating a latch at each side, and tipping it back. Tilting the cut sheet feeder slightly forward allows notches in its front legs to be engaged with pegs on the printer. All that remains is for the rear edge of the cut sheet feeder to be lowered and the job is done. If only installing optional devices was always so easy! Fanfold paper can remain installed with the cut sheet feeder fitted, but the cut sheet feeder must be removed to change fanfold.

The cut sheet feeder fed reliably to the exact same position when form feed characters were used by software to advance to the top of the next page. When the software used repetitive line feeds to start a new page it became fiddly to configure the software when A4 paper was used. Most users will find that paper parking, using manual feed of preprinted letterhead for the first sheet, and fanfold for remaining sheets will do everything that they need, but there will be users for whom it is essential to use cut sheets and for them the feeder would be a boon.

DIP switches

DIP switches are used on all three printers to set a range of system defaults. The options available are a choice of eight national character sets, font, con-

densed mode on/off, character table (italics/graphics) and cut sheet feeder mode. Also able to be set by DIP switch are page length, cut sheet feeder, page length, skip-over-perforation, auto line feed, input buffer capacity, graphics print direction and character pitch. The character table allows the hi-bit characters to be used as italics or as those IBM box drawing characters. Even when the IBM set is selected by DIP switch, italics are available by software control. Page length can be set with DIP switches but only to 66 or 72 lines. Setting page length to 70 lines for A4 paper can be done via software commands.

Fonts

Three standard type faces come with each of the three. These are draft, Roman (NLQ) and Sans Serif (again NLQ). Optional font cartridges are available. Draft is quite adequate for most listings, while the NLQ modes are excellent for correspondence. Roman has an appearance familiar from older typewriters, while Sans Serif is reminiscent of Letter Gothic on IBM Selectric typewriters. 10, 12 and 15 pitch is available, as is expanded, condensed and double high.

The Choice

It's not difficult to choose between these three printers, despite their equal print quality and differing prices. If one needs the wide carriage, the LQ 1050 chooses itself. If a narrow carriage will suffice, and the budget is tight, the LQ 500 is the one. If a narrow carriage is needed and the features like two font slots, paper parking and design for heavier duty are necessary, then the LQ 850 is the one. All offer compatibility with almost any software on the market, as Epson effectively defines the printer market when used with IBM PCs and compatibles. □

Product Details

Product: LQ 500, LQ 850, LQ 1050

From: Epson, Unit 3, 17 Rodborough Rd, Frenchs Forest 2086

(02) 452 5222

Price: LQ 500 \$850;

LQ 850 \$1350;

LQ 1050 \$1860;

Cut sheet feeder options:

LQ 500 \$200;

LQ 850 \$400;

LQ 1050 \$485.

All prices taxed.

Bundles of Books

New Release . . .

LOGO For Beginners

This book is an introduction to the programming language LOGO, and also in an introduction to computing, as it assumes no previous knowledge of computers of programming. LOGO is a good language to learn programming, indeed, that was its original purpose. It teaches how to write programs in a structured form which makes them easy to follow and to understand. This book starts with the famous turtle graphics, and then goes on to explore the mathematical and logical aspects of LOGO, and finally to the interesting topic of list processing, on which many aspects of artificial intelligence are based. LOGO is more standardised than most languages, so it is possible to write a book of this sort to cover all the major versions. However, special attention has been given to Digital Research's DR LOGO, as this is perhaps the most widely known in the U.K. being supplied as standard with many Amstrad and Apricot computers, and also some Atari models. It is hoped this book will introduce the reader to the interest and fun that is to be had from writing your own programs — especially in LOGO.

GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR MULTIMETER

R.A. Penfold **BP239**
This book is primarily aimed at beginners and those of limited experience of electronics. Chapter 1 covers the basics of analogue and digital multimeters — the merits and limitations of each. In Chapter 2 various methods of component checking such as transistors, thyristors and diodes are described. Circuit testing is covered in Chapter 3, with subjects such as voltage, current and continuity discussed.
102 pages \$11.00

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BORLAND'S TURBO BASIC

integrated editor, compiler and linker

ONE OF THE latest offerings from Borland International's stable of compilers is Turbo Basic. Pitted directly against Microsoft's QuickBasic version 2.00, this fully integrated editor, compiler and linker will compile, with minor exceptions, all programs written for Basic and GWBasic interpreters and also the QuickBasic 2.0 compiler.

Having read the press releases and seen the adverts, I couldn't wait to get my hands on a copy. After many phone calls and much disappointment, I finally found a distributor who actually had a copy of the much touted program in stock. 'Send it to me at once,' I said and he did.

The package arrived a few days later, was patiently opened (paper flung in every direction) and copies of the distribution disks were made with bandaged fingers. (Note: impatiently opening programs results in paper cuts and a messy office.)

Turbo Basic is supplied complete with a very large user's manual and two floppy disks – one with the program and the other containing several sample files to play with. The manual covers all aspects of Turbo Basic and includes hints on converting interpreted Basic programs for use in the Turbo Basic environment. It is by no means an introduction to Basic, although as a reference guide it is fairly complete.

More a complete programming environment than just a compiler, Turbo Basic provides an editor, compiler, debug and trace facility, in a little over 200,000 bytes, all glued together in a windowing environment similar to that of Turbo Pascal V4.

There are several major differences between Turbo Basic and QuickBasic 2.0, the most important of which is the implementation of the IEEE (Institute of Electronic and Electrical Engineers) standard for numeric data storage and operation. No ver-

Peter Feldtmann couldn't wait to get his hands on a copy of Turbo Basic – and found it quick, but quirky!

sion of Microsoft's Basic uses this standard and are therefore unable to use the 8087 co-processor which limits the precision and speed of numeric processing.

Turbo Basic will utilise an 8087 processor if one is installed, thereby gaining a tremendous speed advantage in all numeric processing tasks. If an 8087 is not available, all numeric processing is done through 8087 software emulation. This emulation sacrifices speed of execution for greater precision. Turbo Basic will automatically use the 8087 without the need to recompile the source code.

Compatible with Microsoft Basic is perhaps the best way to describe Turbo Basic. However, Turbo Basic offers many extensions and enhancements to the standard we have all had to live with. These enhancements and extensions in Turbo Basic fall into one of two categories: compile directives and run time functions.

The compile time directives and statements consist mainly of instructions permitting conditional compilation, event trapping, inline assembly instructions and specifying the size of run time buffers. These directives and statements are outlined in a separate box. Unless otherwise stated, these extensions are not available in Microsoft QuickBasic 2.0.

The run time functions are perhaps the

area in which Turbo Basic excels. Not only does Turbo Basic provide additional control constructs usually found only in languages such as C and Pascal but also offers many other extensions which finally bring Basic into the twentieth century. These are also shown in the boxed item.

The user interface in Turbo Basic is based on a windowing environment similar to that of Turbo Pascal 4. This interface consists of edit, trace, message and run windows with pull down menus to select various options. The windows may be resized or moved at any time and may be stacked, tiled or laid out in any format. A window-zoom facility is also provided for screen editing or run time checking.

Like most products from Borland, the editor uses a subset of WordStar's editing commands. Context sensitive help is accessible from the F1 key, although scrolling backwards through the help is not possible. The help is also quite terse in places but should be adequate for most users. Help on Basic syntax is not available in Turbo Basic.

The Turbo Basic compiler automatically compiles and links the source code into a complete .EXE file. No run time file is required to execute the completed file, as during compilation all necessary run time code is included. There is no provision for linking OBJ files produced by other languages or compilers. This simplifies the compile-link process but also necessitates the recompilation of reusable blocks of code every time they are needed. The inclusion of run time modules in completed .EXE files makes individual files quite large. To overcome this problem Turbo Basic provides the option of compiling to a chain file. Chain files contain no run time modules, as they rely on a main EXE file (the calling program) to provide them.

Not being able to include relocatable

object files (.OBJ) from other languages such as Assembly is not quite as serious as it might seem, as Turbo Basic includes the \$INLINE directive to allow the more advanced, daring or simply crazed programmer to utilise machine code wherever necessary. The inline code must be relocatable and would look something like that shown in Figure 2; an example of the equivalent code in assembler is also shown.

I would prefer to work with a real assembler, but the inline code facility is better than no access to machine language at all.

The editor

Okay. It all sounds great, doesn't it? What's it really like to use Turbo Basic? Using Turbo Basic's editor to create new programs has a few limitations. Code size is generally limited to 64 Kbyte source files, although source files can be split into several include files to overcome this. The editor uses a subset of WordStar's editing commands, yet all the command sequences can be altered by the user, to tailor them to personal preferences. The editor defaults to the predefined window, which is somewhat limiting as it only shows a small section of the underlying text. The window can, however, be expanded to use the entire screen or resized.

The compiler

Since Turbo Basic holds a few surprises for the unwary, I decided to compile a program I wrote several years ago. This program consists of some 1000 lines of Basic code and has compiled without error on every basic compiler I have tried – until now.

The program compiled within Turbo Basic after some minor modifications due to invalid variable names (loop, for example). This is quite a valid variable name in most versions of basic yet due to the extensions in Turbo Basic, namely the DO...LOOP construct, this variable caused a problem.

The error messages generated by Turbo Basic are quite terse and sometimes quite cryptic, as shown in Figure 3. The cause of the error message after close examination appeared to be the line reading 'goto exit'. As Exit is a reserved word in Turbo Basic, the compiler had minor heart palpitations when it came across the line.

After some experience with Turbo Basic, errors like the one above would be less likely to occur, as one would very quickly become familiar with the added keywords and constructs available.

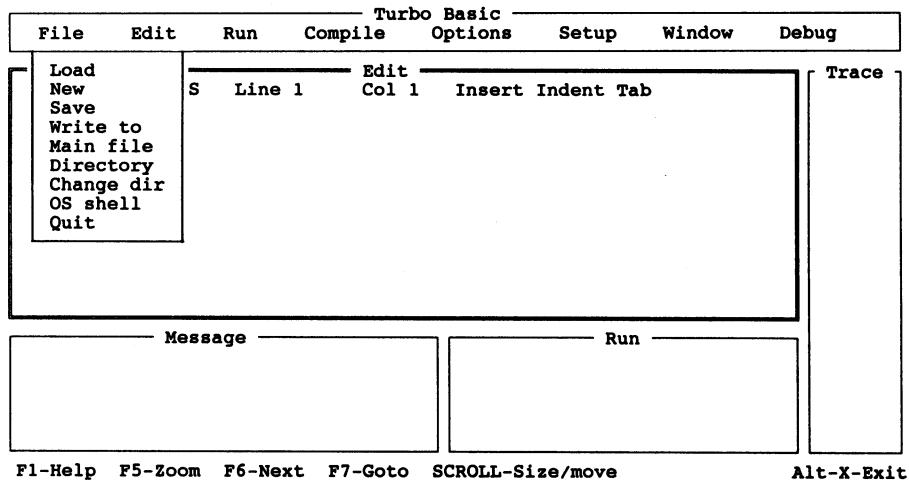


Figure 1. Turbo Basic's main editing screen (shown with the files menu) can be expanded to full screen size.

The inline code must be relocatable and would look something like this –

```
SUB Shriek $INLINE
    $INLINE &HBA, &H00, &H07, &HE4, &H61, &H24
    $INLINE &HFC, &H34, &H02, &HE6, &H61, &HB9
    $INLINE &H40, &H01, &HE2, &HFE, &H4A, &H74
    $INLINE &H02, &HEB, &HF2
END SUB
```

The equivalent code in assembler would be something like this –

```
shriek    proc near
    mov    dx, 0700
    in     al, 61
    and   al, 0fc
lab1:   xor    al, 02
        out   61, al
        mov    cx, 0140
lab2:   loop  lab2
        dec    dx
        jz    exit
        jmp   lab1
exit:   ret
```

Figure 2. Turbo Basic includes the \$INLINE directive to utilisation of machine code wherever necessary.

This section of code –

```
if number = 99 then
    goto exit      (I know, goto's are not to be
                    tolerated - smack wrist.)
exit:
    'do something here
```

generated this rather cryptic error message –

Error 417: Label / line number expected.

Figure 3. Exit is a reserved word in Turbo Basic; the compiler had minor palpitations when it came across the above section of code.

The debugger

The debug facility in Turbo Basic will provide quite comprehensive run time error messages, yet even these messages can cause you to remove your hair in large handfuls. The strangest error message I came across was the 'invalid filename at PC 127654421', when compiling a set of eight programs using the 'Compile to chain file' option. The first six programs (including the main menu which became the EXE file) compiled without fault.

The last two programs were compiled to chain files and behaved quite strangely. These programs compiled without error and ran faultlessly when compiled in memory. However, when compiled to chain files and called from the main menu, they both crashed, resulting in an error message. This error message stated the program counter value for the location of the error. In this case, however, there ain't no such address. How about that Borland – any answers? No matter what I changed in the two programs, similar run time errors occurred – yet all eight program files have been compiled with other Basic compilers without problems over the last three years.

Using a debug facility with any compiler is almost mandatory, yet it would be nice if the one built in to Turbo Basic actually worked in all cases. It works, but sometimes it's not to be believed.

Overall

Turbo Basic has some annoying little quirks, yet the benefits far outweigh the problems. With math co-processor support, high precision, speed (with the co-processor) and greatly enhanced Basic control constructs, Turbo Basic would make a nice addition to any programmer's tool box. The complete programming environment supplied by Turbo Basic takes a while to get used to, yet after several days of bouncing around within the various windows the whole process becomes second nature.

Turbo Basic is not designed purely for the professional programmer – it provides an almost ideal environment for the beginner as well, offering better control and more functionality for the more demanding user. □

Product Details

Product: Turbo Basic

From: Borland International, USA

Distributor: Tech Pacific, 119 Ferrars St, Sth Melbourne 3205 Vic.

(03) 690 9055

Price: \$188 taxed

Compile time directives and statements

Turbo Basic's compile time directives and statements consist mainly of instructions permitting conditional compilation, event trapping, inline assembly instructions and specifying the size of run time buffers. Unless otherwise stated, these extensions are not available in Microsoft QuickBasic 2.0.

\$INLINE allows the inclusion of machine language code. This code is entered in one-byte values, which is similar to the \$inline implementation in Turbo Pascal and Turbo C. Microsoft Basic handles this with calls to machine language program segments created with a macro assembler.

\$IF, **\$ELSE** and **\$ENDIF** statements allow conditional compilation of source code blocks. This is a handy facility usually found only in professional compilers.

\$EVENT (ON/OFF) allows control over the generation of event trapping code in a program. If part of the program must run at full speed, event will interrupt the execution of that section of code.

\$COMn size is used to tailor the size of the communications buffer. The default size is 256 bytes and may be anything from 0 to 32,767 bytes.

\$SEGMENT allows the program code to exceed the 64 kilobyte limit by specifying a new code segment. Without this, statement code size is limited to 64 Kbyte. This command may appear anywhere in the source code. All code after this metastatement will reside in the new segment.

\$SOUND size specifies the size of the sound buffer. The default sound buffer size is 256 bytes or 32 notes, and may be any size from 1 to 4096 bytes.

\$STACK size specifies the size of the run time stack. The default run time stack size is 1024 bytes, but can be anything from 1024 bytes to 32,767.

Run time functions

The run time functions are perhaps the area in which Turbo Basic excels. Not only does Turbo Basic provide additional control constructs usually found only in languages such as C and Pascal but also offers many other extensions.

BIN\$ expression returns the binary string equivalent of a number. This expression is similar to the command HEX\$ found in most versions of basic.

CIEL expression returns the smallest whole number greater than or equal to its argument.

CLNG expression converts a numeric expression to a long integer (4 byte).

CVMD var and **CVMS var** functions were included to enable Turbo Basic to access double and single precision numbers stored in Microsoft Basic random access disk files. These functions convert the values to the IEEE format used internally.

DECR var decrements a variable by one. This is faster than the equivalent statement **var=-var-1**.

DEFLNG var declares the default type for the specified variable to be a long integer.

DELAY time function pauses for a number of seconds. This time is independent of machine clock rate.

DIM array() is used to dimension an array. Upper and lower bounds may be specified – other versions of Basic are limited to lower bounds of 0 or 1).

DO ... LOOP is a loop control construct usually found only in structured languages like C, Pascal, and PLI. (Long awaited!)

ENDMEM returns a long integer indicating the end of available memory.

ERADR returns a long integer representing the memory address of the most recent error.

EXIT is a more general form of the QuickBasic 2.0 EXIT statement; it allows a graceful exit from FOR/NEXT, DO/LOOP, WHILE/WEND, IF/END IF, DEFFN and SUB/END SUB constructs prior to their natural completion.

EXP2 var and **EXP10 var** raises 2 or 10 to the specified power. Most Basics provide only the EXP function.

GET\$ and **PUT\$** read or write a string or string variable to or from a binary file.

INCR var adds 1 to the specified variable. It's faster than the more common **var=var+1**.

INSTAT returns a flag indicating whether or not the keyboard buffer contains characters. This is similar to a non-destructive keyboard read.

LCASE\$ and **UCASE\$** convert a string to upper or lower case. This can be done in other versions of Basic, although at the expense of defining a function or writing a subroutine.

LOCAL varlist allows variables to be re-initialized on entry of a procedure or function. This facility is necessary if the function is to be recursive.

MEMSET declares the upper bounds of memory with a long integer.

MKMD\$ and **MKMS\$** are another concession to Microsoft Basic. These functions convert single and double precision values to Microsoft random disk file format.

MTIMER, depending on usage, is both a statement and a function giving access to a microtimer facility accurate to within two microseconds.

OPEN BINARY opens a file in binary random access mode.

REG is a very handy statement/function giving access to the 8088 processor registers both before and after calling Assembly language routines or system interrupts.

SEEK is similar to fseek() in C; this function enables read/write positioning in binary files.

SELECT CASE is another of the extended control constructs available in Turbo Basic.

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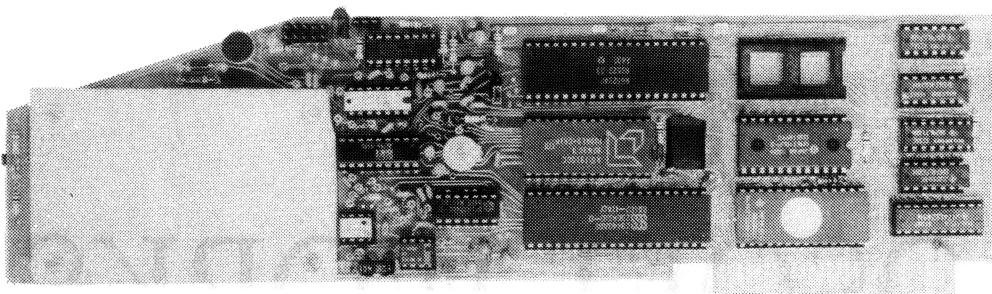
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Sending/receiving files is very simple:—

- Press "ESC" to display menu.
- Select "(S) END A FILE" option
- Answer the prompt "FILENAME?:"

The modem will search the disk for the file, make all the decisions (e.g. binary, basic, textfile, DOS 3.3 or ProDos) and transmit it in the correct format. <CR> transmits the file in memory. Similarly to receive a file select "(R) ECEIVE A FILE" option.

* AUTO ANSWER — AUTO DIAL. Senses true dial tone, ring tone, busy tone and acts intelligently, returning status messages. Characters can be included in the phone number to set baudrate, pause, "await dialtone" and multiple redial on busy. On answer, it selects the incoming baudrate by precision frequency measurement. This is much more reliable than the normal autosearch using carrier detect which is often confused by voice and phone tones. A reliable autosearch is a must for bulletin board operation.

* 300 Baud full duplex or 1200/75 and 75/1200 with fast automatic line turnaround. An upgrade kit to add V22 (1200/1200 baud) and V22 Bis (2400/2400 baud) will be available later.

* Main menu option "(V)IDEOTEXT" shows the VIATEL menu. It becomes a full graphics VIATEL terminal, automatically dialling and transmitting the user ID stored in the battery backed ram. When online, a keypress will immediately save pictures to memory. These can be reviewed later and selectively saved to disk or printed (requires a graphics printer card). Pictures can be loaded from disk and printed out. The modem can act as a videotext host and can be programmed to act on frame information. e.g. — use the clock to ring "MONEYWATCH" hourly and dial you at the office if your shares move outside a given range.

* TELESOFTWARE DOWNLOAD facility to purchase programs over VIATEL from suppliers such as MICROTEX 666 and TANGO.

* A full wordprocessor in EPROM for pre-composition of text before transmission. It can also be used to edit or print received files as well as for general wordprocessing.

* Onboard battery backed calendar clock can time and initiate calls or keep an activity log. ProDos uses it to time and date disk files and it is accessible from Basic.

* 2Kx8 battery powered CMOS RAM stores default parameters, phone numbers, ID, password, logon strings, search codes and setup parameters (e.g. baud rate, parity, printer ON) for each number, allowing single keystroke call establishment to specific areas of complex databases. Main menu option "(T)ELELIST" displays the list of 23 names and one is selected.

* Incorporates XON/XOFF and CHRISTENSEN error correcting protocol. Textfiles are not so fussy but error correction is a must when transferring program files. A debug function can display normally invisible control characters sent by the host.

* Can output directly to printer even when online at 1200 Baud — a fast printer is not required as the printer is spooled out of the receive buffer. A "FILTER" function is available to remove screen control characters from textfiles (these can drive a printer crazy). Special scroll routines print to 80 column screen and printer at 1200 Baud without any lost characters.

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YOU'VE JUST bought a PC clone, have you? One of those PC compatibles with twin floppies for around \$1000, or with a hard disk for \$2000 or less. Now you face the problem of getting legitimate software without breaking the bank – already severely strained by buying the PC in the first place.

Most users need the classic trinity of a good word processor, simple to use database and a spreadsheet. Later, some will buy a modem and will need communications software. You could buy the standard, independent and fully functioned packages like Microsoft Word, dBase III and Lotus 1-2-3, but the street prices of these three combined is around the cost of a low end clone with monitor and hard disk, and is enough to frighten the average user right off.

Users familiar with PCs from work and buying a clone for home, find the Public Domain and User Supported databases, word processors and spreadsheets very good, but novices really need a moderate level of general PC experience before they can learn to use Public Domain software from the limited manuals on disk.

As a result, a number of entry level integrated packages have been released to the market. One of the newest is Microsoft Works for the PC. It includes an excellent

word processor, a very good spreadsheet, an adequate database and adds a communications module as the icing on the cake. Up to eight files can be open at a time, and can all be of the one type or can be a mixture of database, spreadsheet, word processor and communications files, though only one can be actively worked on at any one moment. It is possible to copy data from one function to another, and to

Sorting is available using up to three fields as keys, and is quite fast.

merge data from one application into another. Form letters, with data merged into a document for a database file, are easy, as is copying spreadsheet data into a document or including a chart from a spreadsheet into a printed document.

Works makes extensive use of menus, which is appropriate for an entry level package. These are excellently laid out for beginners, but without a mouse are just a little on the tedious side for advanced users. With a mouse, Works flies for all users at all levels.

Room to grow

Many other entry level integrated packages are very simplistic and suited only to limited home use. To make matters even worse, many make it difficult to take data from their proprietary file formats and transfer it to more powerful packages as the user's needs mature. Such packages are only suited to the low end user who is certain that they will never need to progress in power and features. Microsoft Works overcomes this in a number of ways. First, the individual components are powerful enough that many users will never outgrow them. Secondly, file conversion facilities are builtin to make transfer of data to other packages easy.

Word processor files can be saved in Microsoft Works format, or in formatted ASCII with a carriage return and line feed at the end of each line, or as unformatted ASCII with a carriage return and line feed only at the end of each paragraph – a file format which is easy to load into almost any other word processor for reformatting by the target word processor.

The database can read and write files in what is often called mailmerge format (Works calls it text), with an inverted comma at the start and end of each field, a comma between fields, and a carriage return/line feed at the end of each record. Such files can easily be written and read by a diverse range of databases from dBase to PC-File, and allow data to be transferred in both directions between Works and the majority of other databases.

The spreadsheet uses the Lotus 1A file format and while the commands and functions do not cover an identical range,

many are the same. Lotus graphs display correctly in the Works spreadsheet, and Lotus 1A and Lotus 2 files can be loaded. The communications module allows for autodial and autoanswer, with manual communications from the keyboard plus ASCII and Xmodem file transfer in both directions.

Running Works

Running Works is simple. Merely type WORKS at the DOS prompt, and press Enter for it to load. If you want to use a mouse, then the mouse driver supplied with the mouse should be activated before running Works. One then opens a file in spreadsheet, database, word processor or communications.

A typical screen appears, with a menu bar with several options across the top line of the screen. A hint line occupies the bottom line and the second bottom line is the status line, with details like the file in use, the page number in a word processor and (when loading or saving) the percentage of the file which had been successfully loaded or saved.

There are two ways to get from the text or data area to the menu area at the top of the screen. With the keyboard one presses Alt either before or simultaneously with the highlighted letter in the name of each menu item. With a mouse, one takes the cursor to the desired item in the menu bar and clicks the button.

Either way, a second level menu drops down from the selected item in the menu bar. One can then use the cursor keys to select it, and then press Enter, or just press the key highlighted in the desired item, or use the mouse to select the menu item and click the button to choose it. As indicated before, up to eight files can be open at a time, with any one being on screen and in use at a time. When merging data from more than one file all files concerned must be in memory.

Word processor

The star of the show is undoubtedly the word processor. While quite different in detail from the well known Microsoft Word, it shares much of the underlying philosophy even if the keystrokes (or mouse actions) required to achieve an end might be quite different. I am writing this review with the Works word processor and have had no difficulty adapting to it from Word, or of jumping back and forward at regular intervals.

It has given me the added bonus that, as I wish to check a detail of one of the other modules like the spreadsheet, database or

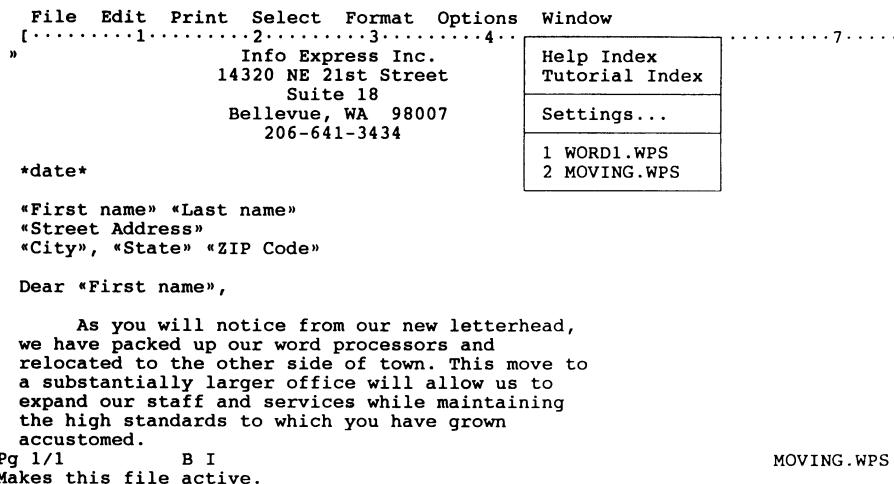


Figure 1. Microsoft Works' word processing screen is typical of all the modules – there is a menu bar across the top of the screen with 'hint' and status lines across the bottom.

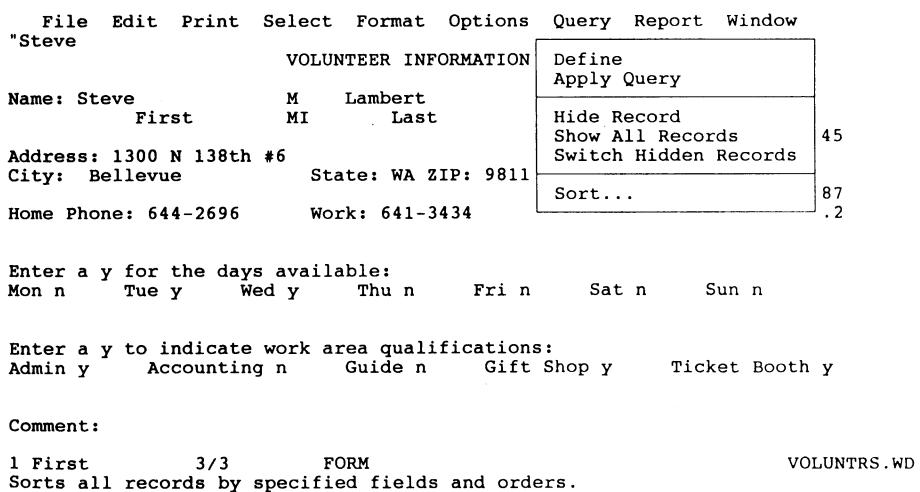


Figure 2. The RAM based Works database offers two views of the data – List shows one line per record and one field per column with several records onscreen at once, while Form (shown here) shows one record at a time for updating.

communications, I merely open a file in that module without quitting Works or the word processor file, look at the action in the other module, and then resume exactly where I left off.

The word processor includes a spell checker, reformats paragraphs on the run, and shows page breaks on screen accurately. It keeps up with my touch typing on a 4.77 MHz PC and, all in all, has the ability to carry out many quite significant tasks. Indenting a paragraph, and hanging indents with the first line (possibly with a paragraph number) to the left of the rest of the paragraph are also supported, as is

ragged right, centred, ragged left and justified text.

Graphs from spreadsheets, and text from spreadsheets, can be inserted and form letters can be created, inserting data from selected fields in a database into letter after letter. Multiline headers and footers are possible. Naturally one can copy text from one place to another, move or delete blocks of text, and can do searches and search-and-replace. As all eight of the possible files which can be open at a time could be documents, one can do text transfer from one to another, but boilerplating a legal document together from

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selected standard paragraphs would be more tedious in Works (not designed for such tasks) than it would be in business oriented word processors like Microsoft Word.

Database

There are two major subdivisions between databases in the IBM PC world. One type, typified by dBase, keeps all the data on disk and merely reads, manipulates and writes one or a few records at a time. The other, like Reflex, and the simplistic database functions in Lotus, loads the whole database into RAM and manipulates it there. This makes it easier to do some things like charting, graphing and analysis, but it does limit the database size to what will fit in memory, while the disk based systems can have databases limited only by free disk space.

The Works database is RAM based, and this does give great flexibility in interrogation of the data and merging of it with other modules. It also removes the need to predefine a field size – if the data is too long for the field it is not lost, but some is merely not displayed, and the field can be resized at will! Like Reflex, two views of the data are available. The list view is akin to a spreadsheet, with one line per record and one column per field, and several records on the screen at a time. The forms view shows one record on the screen, with various prompts and the field names there to be seen.

I loaded a database with around 1400 records, each of about 250 characters into a Works database and found that, with a 640 kilobyte machine and only one Works file in action, that I had used only half the available memory. With such large databases the more significant limitation is the time it takes to load and save such a database from RAM to disk. This is around a minute or more each time with a 4.77 MHz PC and hard disk, but for most home and small business databases, the use of RAM based structure will not create any real problems. As a rule of thumb, if the database will fit onto a 360 Kbyte floppy it can be loaded into Works provided that only the one application is in use and the machine has 640 Kbyte of memory.

Sorting is available using up to three fields as keys, and is quite fast. Data queries are also available, though in general can find only an exact match for the contents of a field, and just specifying a string matching the leading letters or a string within the field will be unsuccessful.

Spreadsheet

While the spreadsheet reads and writes files in Lotus format, it actually operates quite differently. The available functions overlap those of Lotus with many being the same, but with some variations, additions and deletions.

In Lotus, the / key is used to toggle to the menu from the spreadsheet itself, but in Works the Alt key or mouse is used. Formulae can be entered into a cell by pressing the =, +, or - keys, followed by the formula, and cell addresses can be entered into a formula by 'pointing'. Absolute, relative and mixed cell references are supported.

Numbers and text (labels in Lotus) are entered by just putting the cursor on the appropriate cell and typing. Works is intelligent enough to differentiate between cells which contain legal numbers and ones with text that just happens to start with a numeral. If you did want to enter a pure number (say 123.45) as text, then preceding it with an inverted comma, as in "123.45, does the trick. Numbers and text can be left, right or centrally aligned within a cell using menu options.

Spreadsheets defined in Lotus can be loaded and graphs defined in Lotus can be displayed. Speed on the spreadsheet is excellent. On a 4.77 MHz PC with 36 millisecond hard disk, the standard *Your Computer* benchmark spreadsheet loaded slower than it did in Lotus 1A, but faster than it did in Lotus 2.0. Recalculation and saving times were very close for Works, Lotus 1A and Lotus 2 –

	Load	Recalc	Save
	1Sec	1Sec	1Sec
Lotus 1A	72	130	64
	1	1	1
Lotus 2	1198	131	65
	1	1	1
Works	1156	129	80
	1	1	1

Macros

Veteran users of PCs will be aware that there are two different types of macro support offered by software. In each case the macro is a way of capturing some or many keystrokes and replaying them while in a application, automating some tedious task.

The two types? Keyboard enhancements like Smartkey and SuperKey are co-resident software loaded before an application program and can be used with almost any application program, while pro-

grams like Lotus have the ability to include extremely complex macros within the spreadsheet. Works has macro capabilities of the first type, and includes a co-resident macro program on the disk.

Printers

Drivers are provided for an excellent range of printers, but if it doesn't suit your needs, there are also drivers for unformatted output, and for standard daisy-wheel and dot matrix printers with and without the ability to formfeed and/or backspace. While there are several laser printers, the Setup menu and the manual index make no mention of Apple Laser-Writer or of generic PostScript drivers.

No provision is made for users to write their own printer drivers, or adapt a 'near miss' to suit their unique printer, but I found that the printer drivers for Microsoft Word appeared to work well, and with Word came a program MAKEPRD.EXE so that users could write or modify printer drivers. My printer is a Toshiba with emulation of the IBM graphics printer, plus additional character sizes and spaces and the addition of 24-pin near letter quality to the standard draft 9-pin output. Previously I used MAKEPRD to modify the Word driver for the IBM Graphics printer to suit the Toshiba, and the modified Word printer driver worked well with Works!

The package

Microsoft Works comes in a sturdy box, with no less than eight 5 1/4 inch and four 3 1/2 inch disks. Also in the package is the main manual of around 600 pages in a ring binder, a 12 page quick reference keyboard guide, a keyboard template, and a 100 page spiral bound book of appendixes. On top of the package is a simple leaflet called the roadmap which details backing up the distribution disks, running the setup program and starting Works for the first time. Recognizing that many buyers will be novices, a 24 page book is included called *Getting To Know Your Computer*, and is a very well illustrated and written elementary guide to running IBM PCs and compatibles. Last but not least is a book detailing some possible uses for Works.

The manuals are very well written and illustrated, with good explanations of functions every time I needed information. They are organised in reference style, and instead of providing a written tutorial, an excellent, interactive, tutorial on disk is provided that, in its 5 1/4 inch version, takes no less than three of the eight disks.

File Edit Print Select Format Options Chart Window					
"Loan Amortization Table					
	A	B	C	D	
1					Loan Amortization Table
2					
3	Price	\$126,000.00			
4	Down	\$20,000.00			
5	Interest	11.50%			
6					
7	Date	Balance	Payment	Interest	alance
8	11/83	106,000.00	1,049.71	1,015.83	33.88
9	12/83	105,966.12	1,049.71	1,015.51	34.20
10	1/84	105,931.92	1,049.71	1,015.18	34.53
11	2/84	105,897.40	1,049.71	1,014.85	34.86
12					
13	Note: The number of sample payments has been reduced for disk space reasons				
14					
15					
16					
17					
18					
19					
20					
C1			CALC		LOAN.WKS
	Makes this file active.				

Figure 3. The Works spreadsheet reads and writes Lotus 1-2-3 files. Recalculation and saving times are similar to Lotus'.

System requirements

As with most software these days, the addition of a hard disk to your system will make using Works easier, but it is by no means essential. Works can be run on a system with two 360 Kbyte floppy drives, with the program and the printer drivers fitting on one floppy disk with around 30 Kbyte to spare; the Help and Spell files are on a second floppy, and will all fit on a 720 Kbyte floppy. The user is prompted to change 360 Kbyte disks when either help or spell checking is required, and this leaves the B drive for the data disk. Works needs 384 Kbyte of RAM, but as with most software, the more the better.

A great range of video boards are supported, including Hercules, CGA, EGA, VGA, MCGA, Olivetti/AT&T 6300+ High-Resolution Mono, Ericsson Graphics Card 1070, Amstrad PC1512 Graphics Board and the Tandy Model 1000. Hayes compatible modems are required if autodial and answer is to be used, and a vast range of printers are supported. A mouse can be used if it comes with a driver to emulate the Microsoft Mouse.

Roundup

In the past I have had reservations in recommending entry level integrated packages to all but those users with limited immediate and future needs, as many that I have seen do not have the power needed when the user grows, and worse make it difficult to take data to another package when an upgrade is required – not so with Works.

The word processor is excellent, far more powerful than WordStar even if not as powerful as Microsoft Word. The spreadsheet is fast and powerful, and can read and write Lotus files even if the functions are not completely compatible. The communications module is good, offering autodial and answer, compatibility with Hayes modems, and file transfer using ASCII and Xmodem. The database is adequate, but is the least impressive of the modules. It will allow the user to maintain quite large collections of data and transferring the data to other modules or other packages is easy.

Works' ability to mix data from the various modules is excellent, and being able to insert charts from the spreadsheet or data from the database into a wordprocessor document could be a godsend. If one was merely buying a word processor or spreadsheet with the capabilities of those in Word, value would be very good. To get both the word processor and the spreadsheet, plus a database and communications, is truly excellent value. □

Product Details

Product: Microsoft Works
 From: Microsoft, 1 Skyline Pl, Frenchs Forest 2086 NSW
 (02) 452 0288 Price: \$392 IBM version,
 \$563 Macintosh version
All prices taxed. Please note Microsoft's new address and phone number.

T/MASTER

master of the tables

THREE ARE FEW truly integrated programs combining great numerical, statistical and word processing skills. Load up a word processor and you are, more likely than not, reduced to arithmetical calculations at a kindergarten level. Load up a spreadsheet and you can play with numbers to the *n*th degree – but try and write a letter in Multiplan!

Once you have moved the numbers into the word processed document, they are dead! They usually can't twitch themselves into the tiniest calculation. And look at the fate of words stuck into a spreadsheet! They are imprisoned in narrow columns and can be edited only with difficulty.

Many computer users dream of a program where they can call up documents at any time, re-edit them, change a figure and recalculate, all within the same document, letter or report without shifting to other 'frames', 'modules' or 'programs'. They don't want dead, static, numbers in reports that need to be rejuvenated in a separate spreadsheet. They want *living* numbers within their documents.

T/Master

Enter T/Master, short for 'master of the tables'. (Don't despair if you have an 8-bit computer since there is an earlier, nearly as powerful, version called T/Maker which runs on both 8- and 16-bit machines.) If you use numbers and statistics *and* have to write reports *and* maintain a database, then this program deserves your very serious consideration.

T/Master turns your screen and memory into a 'chalkboard' where all data entered in your current 'document' can be manipulated by word processing, spreadsheet and database commands without exiting to other modules or frames.

For example: you can start off a report with text then type in a table of, say, weather statistics, including command

The idea of integrated packages is great – one package does all. But most have one strong 'module' and the rest are just adequate. Jan Roberts has mastered a package that's all strength!

lines, complex formulas and references, including other documents. It will do the required calculations and turn the results into a stacked bar graph. Then enter a table of costs of insulating your home, which will be automatically tallied to get subtotals and total costs. Finally, enter formulas to make it calculate statistical relationships between weather statistics and insulation costs and enter this in your conclusion. You can do all this without leaving the word processor!

If at any time you want to update your report, just edit in new figures as in any word processor, drop down to the command line at the bottom of the screen and tell it to 'compute'. The document is then updated.

This program has no need of esoteric codes – it uses words like Get, Insert, List, Tally, Merge and Compute. You can set up batch files that automatically recalculate your document, merge data files and construct bar graphs all with Compute.

You can set up your own single-word commands, and write your own menus to help novices through more involved 'chalkboards.' It is a programming language that nearly anyone can learn. Just think how you could use it. You could set

up self-calculating letters to be sent to clients – mailmerge and calculate all at the same time. You can even make your documents tamper proof by protecting your in-built calculations from secretarial errors.

Getting Started

T/Master is not copy protected and is supplied on two disks. Once installed (a simple procedure), typing 'tm' brings up the opening screen. The top line instructs you how to move around the 12-item menu which has all plain language commands such as Edit, Create, Save, Delete, Print and Help.

The cursor keys operate only within a document you are editing so they cannot be used for moving around the menu. (I would like the alternative of toggling the cursor pad over to the menu with, say, Esc or Alt.)

If you're asked to provide a file name, you can specify it by wild card. Appropriate file names are then listed and you select the wanted one with the function keys. The menu can be toggled with MENU! to give more screen room.

The bottom two lines of the screen are for typing in commands as an alternative to using the menu on top. Whole strings of commands can be chained and these command lines can be stored in the document itself in a form that will not print out.

Stored command lines

If a string of commands is stored in a document, it can be invoked with the Do or Execute command from the command line (Do deletes the commands from the document, Execute doesn't). If you want to execute all the stored command lines in the file at once, you can either use the Compute command from outside the file or F8-C from within.

This allows you to set up a master docu-

ment containing all the needed command lines. You can then enter fresh data at any time. Do all the stored commands and have a clean file ready for printing out.

Power zones

An area of a document can be set aside as a calculating or graphing scratch pad (or Zone). F7-Z starts the Zone and F7-E ends it. The rectangular Zone is highlighted on the screen.

Within the Zone, calculations can be made on one line, vertically, or even snaking across the page. The Zone has a range of mathematical operators including sines, arctangents, discounts, log base, averages, reciprocals and so on. The results can be turned into a bar graph of varying widths and forms by pressing F8-B!

Or, a Zone can be used to change the typeface or format of a block. F7-T allows you to define the new typeface; F7-Left Arrow left justifies all text in the Zone; F7-Right Arrow, right justifies; F7-Down Arrow, centres.

Fonts-y editing

The editing commands with T/Master are unique and take some getting used to: for example, Ctrl-End moves the cursor to the prior word and F10 deletes the current line. It is easy to change fonts when editing. You can put the cursor over a character in the font you want and 'pick up' the font for use elsewhere (with Esc-=) or you can order the font by number (Esc-5 gets font 5, for example).

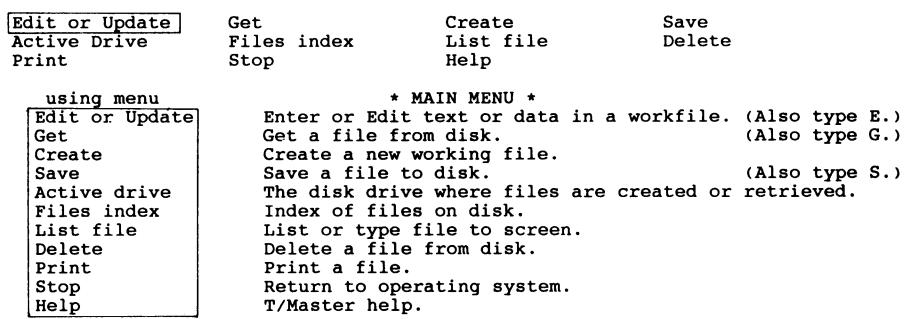
It's possible to drop the date or time into a file with an Esc-D or -T. You can even set it to drop in the date and time when the file is printed out. Page and footnote numbering are automatic.

It has powerful margin controls. You can type in different kinds of margins into the same document. For example –

<<center>>

This will centre all text until further notice. The arrows set the margins. You can right justify or left, fix an indentation for the first line or leave it free to start anywhere – all with the appropriate word between the arrows. If you say 'justify' it will straighten the right margin, if you say 'micro', it will use micro-dot spacing to justify the right margin (necessary if you are using proportional spacing). There are function key alternatives – F5-R for Ragged, -I for Justified, -M for Microdot.

You can tag a margin line with a name so it can be called up later, change just one margin, recall a margin and simultaneously change one of its characteristics.



Press any key to continue...

1/1 What next?

Figure 1. T/Master's Main Menu.

PRINT : F1, F2 move in menu; F3 select; Esc H for help.

Finished selecting From page To page Multiple copies
Print to disk Double space Number pages

using menu

* PRINTING OPTIONS *

Finished selecting	Move on to final print menu.
From page	Print from page number ...
To page	Print to page number ...
Left Margin	Indent document this number of spaces for printing.
Multiple copies	Print multiple copies.
Print to disk	Print file to disk (instead of printer) under new name.
Double space	Double space entire document during printing.
Number pages	Put page numbers at bottom of printed pages.

Press any key to continue...

1/1 Select options or type 'end' to continue:

Figure 2. The print menu and its context sensitive help screen.

Power printing

The Align command reorders the text according to the margin lines inserted. Margins do not adjust until you use this command – or the alternative F5-A to align the current paragraph. Esc-F5-A to align the whole file. You can have multi-line headings and footings – and different ones for odd and even pages. You can even order these to remain inactive until a certain page number is reached!

There is a versatile Print command which allows commands like 'print double copies 4' that would double space the printout and do 4 copies. 'Print contents' would just print out lines containing to disk, adding a page number each time – an easy way of doing a contents page. You can select scattered pages to print out using the Page Skip command. Esc-P at any time will print out the current file. Esc-F-P will print from the cursor forward.

There is a host of design commands

similar to the dot commands in WordStar. Some of these display a great sense of humour. For example, >RAW prints all design commands and tab characters as plain text, >RARE operates merge documents (.CONTINUE) commands but prints all other commands. Finally, COOKED terminates .RARE and .RAW commands!

T/Master has good mailmerge abilities using databases either within the file or elsewhere on the disks. These include mailmerging instructions such as .CONTINUE filename (moves to another file and continues) and .PAUSE MESSAGE (halts until a key is touched and gives a message).

List management

A list can be Tallied, Sorted, Counted and Tabled. Tally is a great command which subtotals a list by item names and finally totals up – it's great for sorting out purchase lists, housing contents insur-

ance, statistical surveys and more. Columns can be Arranged into different sequences.

You can Sort by ascending or descending order, Sort just characters or numbers, or Sort by dates or times. You can tell it to Sort from the top line of the screen down, or only predefined sets of lines.

Saving

Save comes in many different forms. **S**Asave saves in scrubbed ASCII format without control codes (useful in moving files to other programs). **S**save (Super save) preserves everything, modes, margins, right down to cursor position which is marvellous for files you have to continue editing. **S**ave is the normal vanilla save; **H**exsave is for programmers – all characters in the 'hex font' are converted to single bytes on disk.

If you wish to keep your work confidential, 'Mix' it with a code word. The coded document is in all ASCII characters, not just alphabetical. But, in the friendliest way, you can record a clue to help remember the code word: for example, Captain could remind you the code is Moonlight.

To individually check a word, set the

cursor on it, type F6-D, and it will look up the word in its 52,000 word dictionary and list alternative spellings. I checked the word 'flipp'. Up came flippancy, flipped and flipper – but not flip or lip. Overall, the spelling checker is powerful, but much too awkward to use and certainly has shortcomings.

Database

It is really simple to set up a T/Master database using the menu at the top of the screen. Select Create from the menu, then select Database on the next menu. It sets itself up for entry of field names and characteristics in a colourful format. You enter the name, Tab to the field length, then to the instructions. You can write up instructions using the field names such as 'unitcost = COST/NUMBER. A field is limited to one line and will not automatically expand with the data you put into it.

But, you can put in instructions to draw information from other databases, you can give conditional instructions, and you can Scan 14 records at once and change rules and formats – you have full editing facilities as in the word processor. If you add fields, change instructions or move

lines, then Process will update the recorded format.

It's easy to create an index for your database. Just enter 'Index database-name index-field'. Records can be Ordered by ascending or descending order, by dates or by times. You can Select records from a database (using conditions like 'when'), create new Total records, Drop non-totals records, Group records by selected fields, producing summary reports for sub-categories.

You can even draw data out from the database and enter it into a table format using the Table command with many automatically carried out calculations. You can Unload data onto disk selecting it through a Mask. Reports can be made and inserted in your main document in a chosen typeface and format.

Spreadsheet

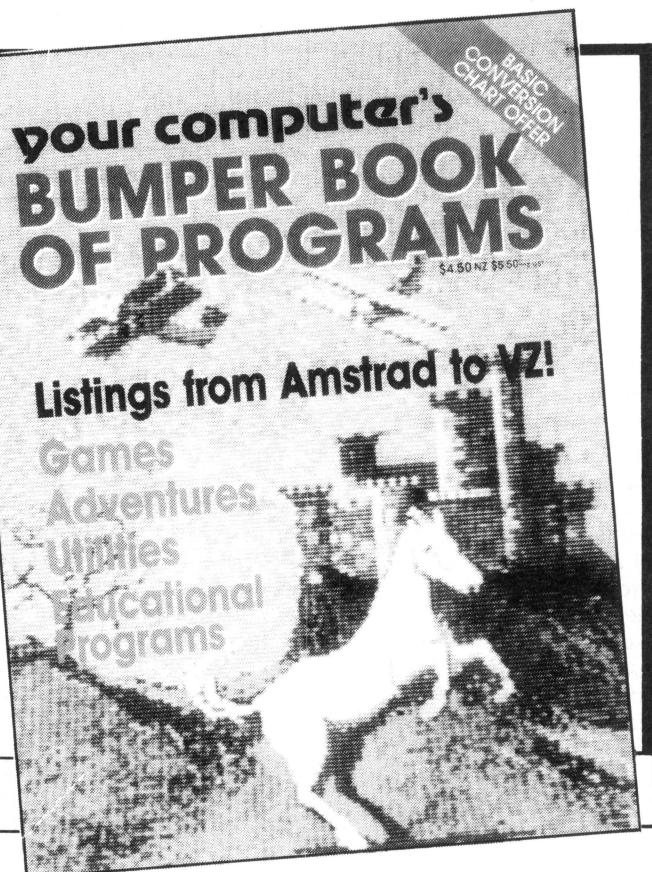
Using T/Master you can draw up a spreadsheet or table to suit your requirements that is fully integrated into a report or a letter to your bank manager. You define your own columns exactly where you want them (except flush against the far left margin for the first 15

your computer's BUMPER BOOK OF PROGRAMS

LISTINGS FROM AMSTRAD TO VZ!

- GAMES • ADVENTURES
- UTILITIES • EDUCATIONAL
PROGRAMS

ON SALE NOW AT NEWSAGENCIES



Start Zone-F7 Z End Zone-F7 E Quick Calc-F8 Z Quick Chart-F8 B

* QUICK CALC ON A ROW OR COLUMN (A ZONE) OF NUMBERS *

Start Row/Col	F7 Z	Mark the upper left corner of a row or column of numbers
End Row/Col	F7 E	Mark the lower right corner of a zone. Mark the zone at least one row (or several spaces) below the last number. You have to insert an (=) sign at bottom of marked col.
Quick Calc	F8 Z	Calculates a group of numbers in a marked zone. An equal sign (=) must be present in the marked zone.
Quick Chart	F8 B	Creates a chart of the marked zone.

* T/Master has a "row and column" free-form spreadsheet. Please see your documentation for more information about setting-up a spreadsheet.
 * Using TOTAL allows you to easily calculate columns in databases.

Press any key to continue...

Figure 3. In T/Master, an area of the document can be defined as a Zone for scratchpad calculations or used as a free-form spreadsheet.

On current drive As ASCII file As Disk file Rename
 Mix/UnMix w/Current settings

Line: 1 of 1 Name: UnNamed Mode: [Manual] Used: 0 of 217K
 [Overtype] [Fxd T] [Ragged Align]

1/1 What next?

Figure 4. T/Master offers the choice of saving the file 'as is', in ASCII or Hex format, or Mixed (encrypted).

spaces on each line are reserved) A column definition line looks like this –

columns xx,xxx xxxx,xxx x,xxxx,xx

The xx's define the position of the column, the decimal places and the numbers of digits. The columns can be named in plain English and referred to by these names in your formula!

The first seven spaces on the left of the spread sheet are reserved for vertical calculation strips. You can put in + and = signs and so on here – and even subdivide these seven spaces so they each operate on only certain columns in the table. The next eight spaces are reserved for explanations and formulas.

A great number of mathematical and statistical functions are available plus a number of unique features – Esc-S will colour in the columns making it easy to enter figures, Esc-F will Freeze all to the cursor's left and above it, making it easier to scroll figures without loosing column headings.

Talk

There is a Talk command for telecommunications via a modem that has been newly added to the program. You can call up telecommunications from any file you are editing or from command

lines. Talk can be set to work automatically using preset parameters or to work manually – Talk Filename will initiate automatic use of the parameters and instructions stored under that Filename including automatic dialing of numbers.

You can send characters as you type them or define an area of the screen for a local edit. This allows you to prepare a block of text using the full word processing facilities and then to send it simply by pressing Return.

T/Master offers an excellent method of setting up business systems tailored to particular needs. This is particularly easy because command lines can be integrated into documents and operated sequentially with the simplest of commands.

One command line could, for example, load data from several databases alongside newly entered data in a new table, construct a bar graph, summarize the results, insert them with the bar graph into a report and mailmerge it with a selected list of addresses. With wonderful plain English commands available, no prior knowledge of programming is required.

I am sure anyone who has to work with statistics, financial calculations or basic data and integrate this with general word-processing would find T/Master absolutely marvelous. □

UPGRADE

T/Master has been upgraded from Version 1.29 to 1.61 and now has even more power. The upgrades are compatible with previous versions and cost a nominal \$75.

Graphics

T/Master can now make 8 different kinds of charts from any set of figures. These include pie, point, radar, three kinds of bar and two kinds of line charts.

All manner of displays are now supported and drivers for an even larger number of laser printers and ink jets are also included. (You really need an EGA screen and a high density printer to appreciate the graphics.) Graphics generated with a Macintosh, ClickArt, under GEM, Windows, PC-Paintbrush and a number of scanners can now be read and integrated with T/Master files.

Printing

It's now possible to create a graphic picture index and call files from it when printing with a 'graphic picname' command.

Another enhancement which moves T/Master towards a fully integrated desktop publishing program is that text will now automatically flow from the bottom of one column to the top of the next with up to nine columns on one page (only when printing out, however). Also, headings can be set to go across more than one column, even in the middle of a page.

The package now comes with a printer control language allowing up to 10 densities to be defined according to the capabilities of your printer, to print graphics and text at different densities, and send escape sequences to instruct the printer.

Telecommunications

You can now load or edit T/Master communication script files that will fully control a smart modem (or work a StupidModem, like mine!) For example, you can tell it what parameters to set, then to dial a specific bulletin board, and give an error message if it can't connect; if it can, the script file waits for the request for your name and then supplies it; it then waits for the password request and supplies it (from another, encrypted file, if you want secrecy) and then steps automatically through up- or downloading a file using your favorite protocol.

Product Details

Product: T/Master V3

From: T/Maker Co, California

Distributor: The Computer Factory, 214 Harbord Rd, Brookvale 2100 NSW (02) 938 2522

Price: \$595 taxed

Hi-Tech C

FINDING A REVIEW of a software product that answers *your* questions can be difficult. Either you ask someone who is not familiar with the software, and who is not likely to be able to devote enough time to using it to give a full and faithful report, or you ask an already dedicated user, who will inevitably be biased towards whatever angle suits his or her application.

This review comes another way; I work with a variety of computers and their users, but am not a dedicated C person. Further, the need arose to recommend a compiler, so some time was to be spent assessing some choices. It is hoped that this has resulted in comments that will be useful to a lot of people.

This review came about with the assistance of Nick Repin, Greg Kable and numerous other associates who I would like to thank for valuable discussions.

Another language?

There is no shortage of computer languages apart from C' Basic, Pascal and Forth thrive; Prolog and Lisp have followers for their special properties; Cobol, and Fortran linger; Occam and Ada are on the way; Algol and HPL are still around ' to name but a few. Assembly and microcoding approaches will probably be appropriate on occasion for years to come. Why introduce another?

Well, one reason is that languages become obsolete. New ideas and conceptual advances which are not conveniently retrofitted, as well as hardware advances, combine to make languages 'dated' and relatively slow. Also, specific hardware or specific tasks (such as multiprocessors or artificial intelligence problems) can demand different languages.

C was created to allow Unix to be written. Hence C is designed for use by computer scientists, not occasional users, so it offers great power and much freedom, but makes demands upon the skill of the user, providing minimal checking. C was designed to get 'close to the machine', but to remain transportable, so that programs

C is a language that offers plenty of freedom – and it has advantages as a beginner's language, as Jonathon Scott points out (and Hi-Tech's compiler has advantages of its own).

can be tightly implemented but also moved to new hardware with a minimum of fuss. It arranged to have a small 'kernel' of built in functions, and a large, growing library of higher level extensions.

These aims have produced a language with a distinctive flavour and a definite purpose. Being potentially 'close to the machine' has the advantage that the compiler ought to produce code approaching assembly language code for compactness and speed of execution. Possibly only Forth can offer comparable performance to a good C compiler's output.

For instance, C allows variables to be declared as 'register', which tells the compiler that the variable is to be used a lot and is to be stored where it can be accessed quickly.

The proximity of the compiler to the machine also means that if the programmer must tinker with the hardware directly he or she can, albeit at the cost of transportability. (This might, for instance, be required to speed up access to a graphic interface whose operation via the operating system is unacceptably slow.)

Since C is a compiler of the multipass type, it offers the opportunity to connect at the assembly or linkage level with code from other sources, and ease of transfer to different machines, or production of a

range of cross compilers. (A cross compiler is a compiler which operates on one machine, but produces code for execution on a different machine.)

C can build to complex functions using extensive libraries. In contrast to reaching a low level, C can also incorporate high level functions, such as hyperbolic trigonometrics and their inverses or comprehensive file operations. A library of subroutines and blocks of code that are built up during a large project, can be incorporated into the compiler.

This pattern of building up the software library, which is expressed so explicitly in Forth by the definition of words and so vaguely in many versions of Basic as subroutines, fits naturally into C. Indeed it provides much of itself in this very form, as many of its common parts are actually written in the small kernel of commands which are the irremovable heart of C. These inner definitions may never be seen by the programmer, because in one or more of the compilation passes, it diligently translates the 'high level' definition into its low level equivalent.

Most beginners start with Basic, but C is suitable as a learner's language for a number of reasons. Basic has far lower ultimate performance ' growth to commercial power is not a path for which Basic is suited, as few real world companies use it. C on the other hand is common. Basic is not well standardised, so the transfer to a new machine can take away a lot of the built up base of code. Local versions of Basic can be very isolated. C is *highly* standardised, so what you learn will remain useful to you for a long time. If you change (upgrade) computers, your skill and your programs can go with you. When you learn C, you must also learn about processors and operating systems. This knowledge takes time to acquire, but it is something any professional software person must eventually tackle.

Because of its structure and the availability of a variety of forms, such as local variables, C inherently lowers the bug rate in code produced by a programmer.

What makes a good C compiler?

Before discussing Hi-Tech C specifically, I would like to examine just what attributes a compiler may possess which might make it better or worse than another. In other words, let's define the things to look for in a compiler.

Code density is simply the measure of how small an executable file is produced when the C statements are compiled. It is not quite this simple, as one compiler might produce a larger executable than its competitor for a small program, but a smaller or comparable executable for a large program. Nevertheless, executable size is important. Half the motive for C's low level extreme is the ability to generate compact, fast code.

Code execution speed is the other side of code density. Executable size and executable speed are often in competition as aims, but together they say a lot about the tightness of a compiler. Execution speed is critical in any real-time application, and many languages are rejected for a task on this basis. Forth and C specifically aim at performing in this area. It is C's ability to handle this speed as well to tackle large tasks (such as operating systems) which constitute much of its appeal.

The compiler execution speed might seem very secondary a property. However, if you are a 'business' user, you pay for the time a programmer sits and awaits a compilation, and if you are doing a quick test to see which of two possible paths is better, it is possible to forget what you were doing if the test forces you to go away and kill time, so do not underestimate the degree to which compilation speed can impair efficiency.

Expression complexity is a rather interesting property of a compiler. In Basic there is a line length as well as a stack length, both of which can prevent an expression being evaluated. In C it is possible to ask the compiler to nest too deeply, to have a line which must be broken down in order not to be too complicated to compile. This limit should be large enough that only the most intricate and incomprehensibly deep expression is thrown out.

A compiler can be a 'native compiler' or a 'cross compiler', depending upon what operating system it runs under (what computer you are using), and for what operating system or CPU it is compiling code to run on. The term 'cross compiler' implies that the host and target are different, which is to say that you are writing a pro-

gram on one computer which is designed to run on a different one.

It is not only good to be able to buy whatever you need, but it is often nice to be able to buy exactly the same C for another situation. Every new machine for which or on which you can use a compiler is another machine with which your skill and your programs can quickly be used, so the range can be very important if you ever wish to upgrade or add to your machines.

We said that speed and size of the compiled output can compete to some degree.

Most beginners start with Basic, but C is suitable as a learner's language for a number of reasons.

Compilers usually offer optimisers which put one of these two ahead of the other, in case you are short of time or space in particular. The optimisers will have properties such as effectiveness, speed and so on themselves.

Compiler size will be significant if you don't have a lot of memory. On a virtual-memory-supporting machine, the bigger the compiler's required space, the slower it might have to run, because of the increased I/O. On a small machine (for example, CP/M systems) the compiler will have less memory to play with anyhow.

Support of archaic functions, and of the latest standard forms, is important. This comes into play if you receive a source code file and need to compile it on your machine. It is not pleasant to have the thing tell you it does not know some new or old word, especially if you don't know it either, because getting around this is time consuming.

Compilers can offer a host of very useful functions local to that compiler, or local to an operating system upon which it is running. These are great if you don't need to maintain transportability, but must be avoidable if you have to keep it. Thus the alternative tools are best provided too.

The Unix operating system is unusual in that it regards all things connected to the computer as equivalent 'files'. Therefore, the keyboard is a read-only file, the screen a write-only one and all peripherals just

look like files on some imaginary storage medium. Typing a file becomes copying it from one place to another. This insulation of the program from the awareness of what a device is provides a useful flexibility. A C compiler ought to offer this same insulation in the interests of transportability of applications.

Documentation

Documentation is probably the most important attribute! The library needs to be carefully described and easy to refer to. Local operating system parts must be flagged and discussed. Finding out how to cope with some special attribute (such as ROMmability of code) should be easy with the documentation.

If you have an application which demands interaction with low level code from other sources, adherence to the standards of the machine may be important. For instance, use of assembler mnemonics defined by the maker of the CPU in a computer can be critical for assembly mating of code from one compiler and another.

Compilers provide some sort of assistance in debugging the executable code. In Basic, when it is interpretive rather than compiled, debugging is simple, because the program is translated into executable machine code line by line. Some debugging tools are very flashy. The opposite end of the extreme is simply to step through the executable code, find the bug, and then try to work out where in the high level statements the error has been made.

Hi-Tech C

With its code density Hi-Tech C seems to have the competition at bay. Tested, admittedly only on smallish applications, and against only three other handy compilers, it gave executable files as little as half the size of the alternatives, and never as big. This is suspected to be not only a result of the compiler's claimed 'sophisticated code generation strategy' but good library and link management. Full marks.

It is difficult to comment on its code execution speed here with a limited specific comparison. There are very few people who can offer an objective comparison between Hi-Tech and any other compiler, for the simple reason that almost no professionals have spent time compiling the same code on the same machine with two different compilers! Although, Hi-Tech code is said to be fast by many of its users.

I ran some simple programs, and felt

that it was not significantly different ' not enough to dare to draw conclusions. I can say that it does not suffer from any stupidities that might force down the speed. It seems safe in the circumstances to take the word of the company's own descriptions which boast the use of methods that ought to ensure fast executing code. I doubt anyone would complain about the execution speed.

The compiler was found to be very much limited, on the jobs we tested, by I/O. Where there was a compiler available on the same machine for comparison, I found it to be rather heavier on disk usage, and thus slower. This could be a significant problem on machines which do not have a hard disk.

With IBM-type PCs, the speed of the (hard) disk, the clock speed and the RAM speed all vary with maker and model and cost. For instance, some Taiwanese AT-clones, boasting a fast clock speed, perform dreadfully on account of having slothful disks and slack RAM. Execution speed is not proportional to clock speed, necessarily. The overall variation, often an order of magnitude, swamps the edge a compiler may have on everyday tasks.

I had trouble with expression complexity only on the CP/M (Z80) version. A routine which Aztec C could swallow proved to overwhelm the Hi-Tech compiler. This is embarrassing, but not serious. One must recall that C is a language for larger machines, and is only ported to CP/M machines as some sort of concession, as far as this reviewer can see.

Aztec C actually allows table sizes to be controlled as an option. This presumably indicates some concern over the problem, but then the version of the Aztec compiler used was tailored carefully to CP/M.

Range of Hosts and Targets

Hi-Tech gets full marks here too. Available target processors include Z80, 64180, NSC800 (Microbee); 68000, 68010 (Apple Mac, Amiga); 8086, 80186, 80286 (IPC); 65816 and 8096. Host operating systems include CP/M-80, MP/M-80 (Microbee), CP/M-86, TurboDOS, PC-DOS, MS-DOS (PC), Concurrent DOS, Atari ST, Unix, Apple IIGS and Amiga.

Hi-Tech offers an optimisation pass which the manual indicates defaults to space optimising. It has a speed-optimising sub-option, which it is claimed helps on function entry, and is thus useful for cases of frequently called functions. The manual is rather misleading on this. In one place it suggests that the optimiser is optionally omitted, but it is as elsewhere suggested, optionally invoked

Some compilers do not make any optimisation choices available. However, some programs tried with this one showed no significant reduction in size. Some programs exhibited quite noticeable reductions which were evident by viewing the intermediate assembler files. It is difficult to know just what to conclude here, as C is a fairly tight language in itself, and optimisation not likely to reap large rewards in space. It could be expected that speed may be obtained in exchange for space by 'flattening out' subroutines into in-line code, though the gain might be small.

I suspect that the optimisation provided here is simply a 'peep-hole' type, which operates by adding another pass to the compiler, and merely reaping what optimisation benefits follow from having the further pass, for instance optimisation of jump instructions and so on. On the whole, this optimiser does not give the impression of being particularly potent.

Hi-Tech's compiler, especially the CP/M version, is comparatively large. There are bits you can do without, but it is better to have more of the set of utilities available at the same time. If you are running only floppy disks, this could become inconvenient. A single 386 kilobyte disk for the system, editor and C utilities is about the minimum that you would want to have to deal with, and that allows a second disk to carry the files you are editing.

Supported syntactical forms

Hi-Tech states in its literature that as soon as the new ANSI standard is passed, it will support it. (See for example *C Standard Library*, Jack Purdum and Timothy C. Leslie, Que, 1987.)

That's a bold statement, considering that Microsoft has started the incorporation already. It is worth noting that the price of the compiler includes one year's updates and guaranteed response support. This with the promise of ANSI standard, looks good, and if the standard is in when you go to buy, you are well advised to check that this support is there.

Hi-Tech does offer the basic library routines, and no more are required than are provided. In comparison, Microsoft C (under MS-DOS) already offers many library routines beyond the operating system specific ones, which Hi-Tech does not. These can be quite useful. The price difference reflects the support extent. Hi-Tech states that it does not support anachronisms.

Importantly, Hi-Tech C supports the usual low level Unix functions, which means that transportability is good. Hi-

Tech indicates clearly when a function is specific to an operating system. The operating system specific routines are few, in comparison with those supplied with, say, Microsoft C.

An argument in favour of this approach is mountable, of course, but it is very nice to have use of the vastly larger (if potentially more dangerous) library of Microsoft C. In regard to Unix functional mapping to local operating system, Hi-Tech has taken good care to see that the I/O mapping is sound.

Documentation

The Hi-Tech compiler comes with an A5 ring-bound manual in two sections. These are the section common to all versions, and a section specific to the version you have, which takes account of the operating system under which the compiler is to run. In common with other compilers the documentation is intended to be taken along with a C reference manual. (The standard C reference manual is *The C Programming Language*, Brian W. Kernighan and Dennis M. Ritchie, Prentice-Hall, 1978.)

The documentation is quite good. It tells you most of the things you want to know, and it gives those examples which can be so critical to quickly getting familiar with a C function.

One must realise that C is a language which allows the programmer plenty of freedom ' with which to get into terrible problems. C does virtually no run-time checking, such as verifying that array indices are not out of bounds. Hi-Tech C claims to give extended checking facilities which approach those of 'lint'. (The lint program is a Unix utility for searching programs for bad or dangerous constructions, erroneous or missing usages of variables and so on. It is rendered necessary by the lack of checking in the language itself.) Whereas Fortran will report an error for an incorrect type usage in a statement, C often does not. Confusion of pointers and data in C leads to insidious run-time bugs.

There is no doubt that Hi-Tech C does give useful warnings, such as the failure to use a declared variable, but it is not what one might call a comprehensive checker. This is not a criticism, for it is above the C requirement, but the new user should not be led into thinking that it offers total and instantaneous error checking like Hewlett-Packard Basic.

The documentation is comparable to that of a number of C compilers. It is, on the other hand, far less comprehensive than that which Microsoft provides ' about one third the magnitude. Hi-Tech's

bare bones approach is acceptable, but not the best that can be found.

Assembler compatibility

The multipass format of C compilers includes an assembly level. Hi-Tech provides its own separate assembler for this level, appropriate to the processor on which the code is to execute. I did not have cause to use it as an assembler.

However, some users may need to incorporate assembly code from another source. Magazines are full of code that you might want to import. A problem presents itself here, in that the Hi-Tech assembler does not support the CPU maker's mnemonics. This means, for example, that Intel standard assembly source code may not assemble with the Hi-Tech assembler on an 8086-type machine.

No statement is made in the documentation which indicates whether an Intel assembler can be used with the other passes of the Hi-Tech compiler or vice versa. This is a potential problem for anyone who needs to import code from other sources. All the other sources of assembly level code require painful modification to be of any use. Some people I spoke to thought

highly of the Hi-Tech assembler itself, while others disliked it apart from its incompatibility.

Hi-Tech provides a debugger and its support features in the appropriate compiler passes. Microsoft offers whizz-bang debugger systems for its C on MS-DOS machines, such as Codeview. These provide full colour multiline displays and a whole lot of snazzy features. They are also terribly machine specific.

In the course of this review, one piece of code was found which seemed to be misbehaving, and which appeared to all who were consulted to be clean at the C source level. It has been passed on to Hi-Tech, although I have had no response as yet.

Summary

The Hi-Tech package is professional. It has produced tight fast code in applications being sold in Sydney, and is available for a wide range of machines. Its price includes one year of updates, answers to questions by phone and guaranteed response to problem reports. As such, it represents excellent value.

Microsoft C, regarded by some as a 'Rolls Royce' C compiler, costs, for a PC,

considerably more than Hi-Tech C, and though it offers more, I am inclined to think that the value is lower. If you are a business where the compiler cost is minimal in comparison to programmer's time, this might be a better bet. For learning, small business applications and so on, Hi-Tech is probably the go, and I had no trouble eliciting statements to this effect from users.

There is a lot to be said for using a company that is 'local', that is in the same country, apart from arguments about buying Australian. Local companies are much more likely to be able and willing to help you if you have need of this. Hi-Tech's pledge of support reflects its appreciation of this. □

Product Details

Product: Hi-Tech C
From: Hi-Tech Software
PO Box 103, Alderley 4051 Qld
(07) 300 5011

Price: CP/M \$275; DOS \$330;
Atari \$275;
Apple (for CP/M card on Apple II) \$274
All prices taxed.

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GRAPHICS TECHNIQUES

So far we've covered the basic techniques of graphics and some simple Cad procedures, now let Miroslav Kostecki and Paul Vermeer a-maze you . . .

WHAT COMES to mind when you think of a maze? Confusion? Tunnels and passages everywhere? Too hard to understand? In fact, we also associate mazes with intelligence. It is generally accepted that the greater the intelligence, the faster a path will be found through a maze. Scientists create many mazes for animals of various types to test their reactions and intelligence.

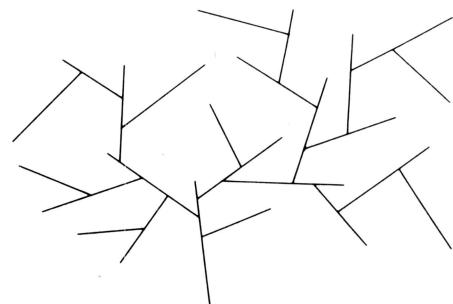


Figure 1. The simplest of mazes – just like a tree, there's only one path between any two ends.

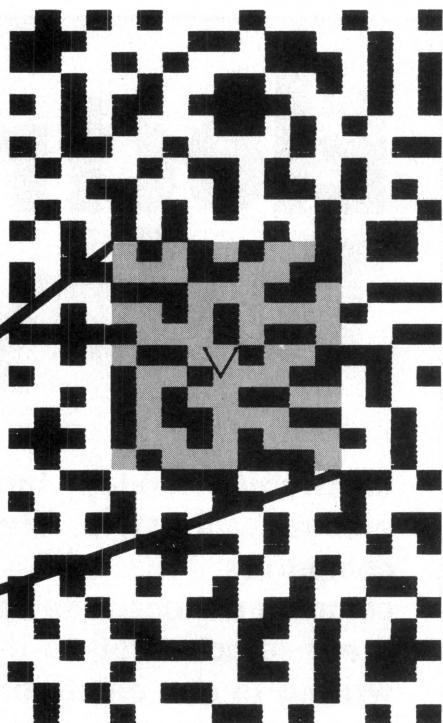
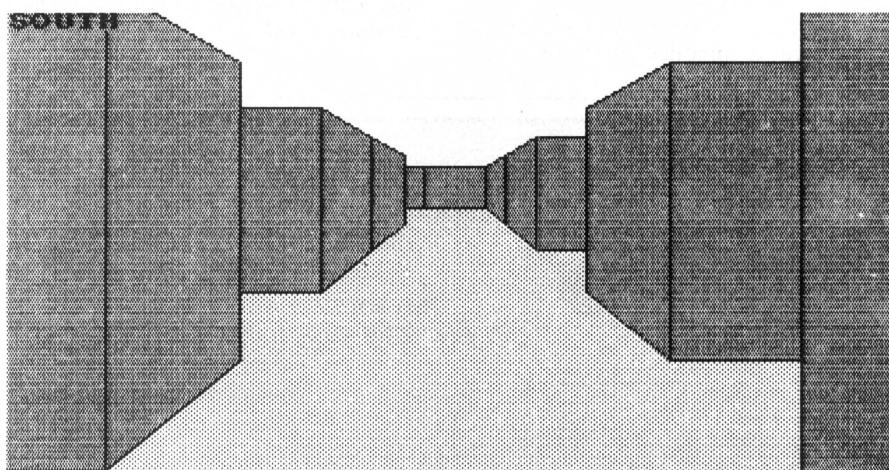


Figure 2. A three dimensional view (top left) from within a dense two dimensional maze (bottom left). The view is shown looking south from the small arrow shown highlighted (above).

branches on a tree are usually fairly straight. However, if we use crooked lines instead, our lines will form more of a maze. It then becomes an arduous task to find the correct passage through. Of course, the lines still must not cross or touch other branches. Each branch still touches another only once.

On a computer, a maze is usually constructed by first drawing a grid of small boxes over the screen. An array is set up to store the state of every edge on the grid. Now as the edges are taken away, a passage is constructed along the boxes. Branching is made by forming new passages off the old ones. The computer can check if a passage exists by checking the array which is changed as the passages are constructed.

Amazing improvements

A major consideration in the construction of mazes is where the beginning of the first branching is going to occur. This point would be picked randomly, but far away from the start and end points. The beginning and end should be as far from each other as possible to increase the length and difficulty level of the path.

Notice, too, that while a very large maze takes much longer to construct than a small one, it will be much more difficult to traverse. The size of the maze is normally limited by the screen resolution and memory capacity, as well as the speed of the computer.

Instead of using an array, the computer can simply check the state of the screen using a screen test command. This eliminates the need for arrays. Using the screen to test the maze also means that very large, complex mazes can be constructed on a high resolution graphics screen and little memory is being used. Array storage can be very heavy on memory when large, complex mazes are constructed.

Another big improvement is to do away with the grid system all together and simply construct the maze 'freestyle'. This enables a more complex maze to be made in a smaller space. A different checking system though, is obviously needed to scan the screen for other passages already constructed. However, with greater complexity comes a problem: the computer will have to work harder to find suitable branching places. No need to worry though, this is overcome with the next, most important improvement.

Many maze generating programs simply sample random spots in the maze to find a branching point which is suitable. This causes huge delays, especially when the

maze has nearly filled its allotted space and there are few branching points left. There have been many methods to overcome this and the following one seems as good as any other.

As the paths are constructed, block by block, the computer stores every point of every path. Then when the current branch stops, the programs simply picks a branching point out of the array and either starts from there, if it is legitimate, or eliminates the point out of the array and reduces the number of stored points. When the array runs out, then there are no more possible branches and the computer has completely filled the space.

It seems that with this branch/storage method an extremely large array of points will be needed, but in reality an array of about 2000 points is usually enough. When the 2000th point is stored, then the current branch stops and many of the old, useless positions are thrown out before another branch begins.

The program given in Listing 1, Maze Draw, uses all of the improvements described so far. It uses the Test command to test points on the screen and a branching point array of 2000 points. A larger array may enable the program to proceed faster. Carefully type the program into your computer and observe how the array

```

1000 '---Turn Maze into 3D display-----
1010 '
1020 ' Load maze into array
1030 DIM x(15),t(15),b(15), m(80,50)
1040 FOR i=0 TO 80
1050 FOR j=0 TO 50
1060 m(i,j)=1
1070 IF TEST(i*8,j*8)=0 THEN m(i,j)=0
1080 NEXT j
1090 NEXT i
1100 '
1110 ' Calculate perspective points and store
1120 dx=250: tx=280: bx=400: x=-dx/3
1130 x(0)=x: t(0)=250+tx: b(0)=250-bx
1140 s!=1.62
1150 FOR i=1 TO 15
1160 dx=dx/s!: x=x+dx: x(i)=x
1170 tx=tx/s!: t=250+tx: t(i)=t
1180 bx=bx/s!: b=250-bx: b(i)=b
1190 NEXT
1200 '
1210 ' Setup display
1220 MODE 1: INK 0,13: INK 1,0
1230 BORDER 9: INK 2,5: INK 3,20
1240 x=RND*50+10.5: y=RND*30+10.5
1250 IF m(x,y)<>0 THEN 1240
1260 PLOT -10,10,1
1270 dx=0: dy=-1
1280 '
1290 ' Main loop; display & wait for key presses
1300 GOSUB 1470 ' redraw 3d
1310 LOCATE 1,1
1320 IF dy=-1 THEN PRINT "SOUTH";
1330 IF dy=1 THEN PRINT "NORTH";
1340 IF dx=-1 THEN PRINT "EAST";
1350 IF dx=1 THEN PRINT "WEST";
1360 IF INKEY(0)<>0 THEN 1390
1370 IF m(x+dx,y+dy)=0 THEN x=x+dx: y=y+dy: GOTO 1300
1380 IF m(x+dx,y+dy)=1 THEN SOUND 1,300
1390 IF INKEY(8)=C THEN tt=dx: dx=dy: dy=-tt: GOTO 1300
1400 IF INKEY(1)=0 THEN tt=dx: dx=-dy: dy=tt: GOTO 1300
1410 IF INKEY(2)<>0 THEN 1440
1420 IF m(x-dx,y-dy)=0 THEN x=x-dx: y=y-dy: GOTO 1300
1430 IF m(x-dx,y-dy)=1 THEN SOUND 1,300

```

```

1440 GOTO 1360
1450 END
1460 '
1470 ' 3d Redraw Subroutene
1480 CLS
1490 dist=1
1500 xx=x+dx: yy=y+dy
1510 WHILE m(xx,yy)=0
1520 dist=dist+1: xx=xx+dx: yy=yy+dy
1530 WEND
1540 IF dist>15 THEN dist=15
1550 ' vertical lines
1560 FOR i=1 TO dist
1570 MOVE x(i),t(i): DRAW x(i),b(i)
1580 MOVE 640-x(i),b(i): DRAW 640-x(i),t(i)
1590 NEXT
1600 ' horizontal at end
1610 MOVE x(dist),t(dist): DRAW 640-x(dist),t(dist)
1620 MOVE x(dist),b(dist): DRAW 640-x(dist),b(dist)
1630 '
1640 FOR i=0 TO dist-1
1650 '
1660 'find block on left side
1670 IF dy=-1 THEN m=m(x-1,y-i)
1680 IF dy=1 THEN m=m(x+1,y+i)
1690 IF dx=-1 THEN m=m(x-i,y+1)
1700 IF dx=1 THEN m=m(x+i,y-1)
1710 '
1720 'draw horizontal if a passage exists
1730 IF m<>1 THEN 1770
1740 MOVE x(i),b(i): DRAW x(i+1),b(i+1)
1750 MOVE x(i),t(i): DRAW x(i+1),t(i+1)
1760 GOTO 1810
1770 MOVE x(i),b(i+1): DRAW x(i+1),b(i+1)
1780 MOVE x(i),t(i+1): DRAW x(i+1),t(i+1)
1790 '
1800 ' find block on right side
1810 IF dy=-1 THEN m=m(x+1,y-i)
1820 IF dy=1 THEN m=m(x-1,y+i)
1830 IF dx=-1 THEN m=m(x-i,y-1)
1840 IF dx=1 THEN m=m(x+i,y+1)
1850 '
1860 ' draw horizontal line if passage exists
1870 IF m<>1 THEN 1910
1880 MOVE 640-x(i),b(i): DRAW 640-x(i+1),b(i+1)
1890 MOVE 640-x(i),t(i): DRAW 640-x(i+1),t(i+1)
1900 GOTO 1930
1910 MOVE 640-x(i),b(i+1): DRAW 640-x(i+1),b(i+1)
1920 MOVE 640-x(i),t(i+1): DRAW 640-x(i+1),t(i+1)
1930 NEXT i
1940 '
1950 ' fill floor and sky with colour
1960 MOVE 320,0: FILL 2
1970 IF dist>1 THEN MOVE 320,399: FILL 3
1980 RETURN

```

Listing 2. This is an extension of Listing 1 that uses the newly constructed maze to position you randomly within it and then constructs a three dimensional view from that position. The can be changed by stepping forward or backward or by turning to the left or right.

is constructed. A delay between lines 310 and 320 may be inserted so that you can see the process more clearly.

Three dimensions

Once a maze has been created, it can be used in various ways. A simple two dimensional representation on the screen is the most common. Sometimes the screen only displays a small section of the maze with most of the maze being off the screen. This is more difficult to program, but it is possible to have a much larger overall maze. Another way to extend the perception of the maze is to give a three dimensional scene of what it would look like if we were actually in the maze itself, looking down a corridor for instance, with side passages branching off.

A maze or any passage or array, can be transferred into a three dimensional view by projecting the picture as if you were standing inside the passage, room or maze. Side passages are easy to build on just by making lines horizontal instead of diagonal. Now, look at Figure 2, which shows both a maze in two dimensional form, and a three dimensional view from within the same maze.

In the view, all vertical lines stay the same, in precalculated perspective, until the other end of the passage is reached. The side walls follow this line of perspective unless a side passage exists, in which case a horizontal line is drawn as the corner of the passage, both above and below.

Listing 2 is an extension of Listing 1. It will take the newly constructed maze and position you randomly within it. Then a view is constructed of the inside of the maze in three dimensions. By pressing four keys you may step either forward, backward or turn to the left or right. The display will then quickly redraw the new view. The directions, North, South, East and West are given with the top of the maze taken as being North.

Probably many uses for mazes and particularly the three dimensional passage section have already come to mind. Programs such as adventure games are virtually half done with the above system. The 'passages' program may even be expanded to duplicate the movements through a building design to find.

In conclusion, note the use of random numbers in the maze drawing process. Computer graphics are relying more and more on random and semi-random constructions. Random numbers are going to play an increasing role in computing as programs become more complex. In fact, these random functions are extending into every avenue of computing. □

Real and Protected modes in the 80286

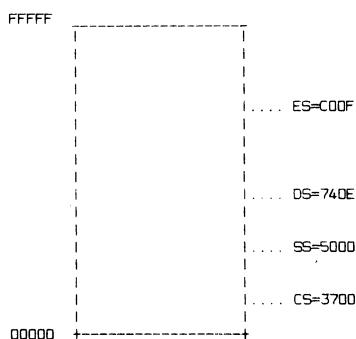
Why can't the 80286 chip run Real mode software while in Protected mode?
John Summerfield explains . . .

IN HIS REVIEW OF the IBM PS/2 model 50 (YC, July '87), Les Bell said that the 80286 cannot run software written for Real mode when it is running in Protected mode. I believe some expansion of his comments is appropriate for those readers who do not understand the difference between Real mode and Protected mode. This discussion is directed at those with a programming background, and those with some knowledge of computer architecture.

The 80286 in Real mode

When an 80286 is running in Real mode, its four segment registers contain Real memory addresses. These registers address real memory in units of 16 bytes, called paragraphs.

Any memory address comprises two components, a segment address and an offset address. Both parts of the address are 16 bits long. The following reflects the 80286 memory, as viewed in Real mode –



The 80286 has four segment registers – CS – for Code Segment; program instructions are fetched from this area;

DS – for Data Segment; data items are normally accessed in this segment; ES – for Extra Segment; optionally, data items may be accessed in this segment; SS – for Stack Segment; used for saving subroutine return addresses, parameters, and other data items. Accessed by CALL, RETurn, PUSH and POP instructions

Programmers generally have DS and ES pointing to the same segment, but they may have different values to allow easy copying of data from one arbitrary memory address to another. Please note that all these memory addresses are hexadecimal numbers, so that 3700 corresponds to the decimal number 14080.

The memory addresses are 20 bits (5 hexadecimal digits) long, and allow the 80286 to address 1 megabyte (1,048,576 bytes) of memory. I have assigned arbitrary values to each of the segment registers; each register can contain any of 65,536 values, and they can (and often do) address the same area of memory if required.

The area of memory addressed by a segment register is called a segment, and each segment may be up to 65,536 bytes long. The address of a segment is the address of the first paragraph of memory in the segment. Since the segment registers contain a paragraph address, the Code Segment is at paragraph address 3700, which corresponds to byte address 37000.

To address any byte in memory, we must store an appropriate segment (or paragraph) address in the appropriate segment register, and add an offset to it. Say we wanted to address a byte at address 740F5. With the segment register values above, we could simply use an off-

set of 15 (740E0 + 15). This instruction sequence would also allow us to address location 740F5 –

MOV AX,740F	put the segment address in register AX
MOV ES,AX	copy it to the segment register

These two instructions would allow us to address it with an offset of 5. Because of the segmented nature of the 80286 memory, we write addresses like this: 740E:0015, 740F:0005, and so on. These are alternative ways of addressing the same memory location.

Another feature of Real mode operation is that the application has access to the entire instruction set of the CPU. It can perform its own input and output, and can access and update any area of memory.

The 80286 in Protected mode

It is apparent that, in Real mode, any memory location can be addressed with a wide range of combinations of segment addresses and offsets. However, when the 80286 is switched into Protected mode, the memory addressing scheme changes dramatically. The segment registers no longer contain memory addresses; they contain values used to index a table of segment addresses. This table is called a Descriptor Table.

Because of this difference in memory addressing, the registers CS, DS, ES and SS are no longer called segment registers; they are called segment selectors, to reflect their new function of selecting segments of memory. With this memory addressing scheme, the addresses 740F:0015 and 7410:0005 are not necessarily the same (but they could be). The numbers

740F and 7410 reference two different entries in the Descriptor Table.

The descriptors are each 8 bytes long, and contain a 24-bit segment address (giving access to 24 Mbyte of memory), the segment length (in bytes) plus some control information. A descriptor table cannot exceed 64 kilobytes in length, and so cannot contain more than 8 Kbyte descriptors. These descriptors cannot normally be modified by application programs; this provides a means of protecting programs from each other.

Since the segment descriptor contains the segment length (in bytes), applications cannot use memory beyond the defined area within the segment: in Real mode, segments are 64 Kbyte long, whereas in Protected mode they can be as short as 1 byte.

In Protected mode, the 80286 software can control the facilities used by applications programs. It controls whether they can do their own input and output; descriptors can only be established at the highest level of privilege.

Why Real mode software won't work in Protected mode

When the 80286 switches to Protected mode, there is no way back. It continues in Protected mode until it is reset, or turned off. (It's possible, of course, to use external hardware to perform the reset under software control.)

There are two features of the 80286 which prevent software intended to operate in Real mode from functioning in Protected mode. In Real mode, the following instruction sequence is valid –

```
MOV AX,ES      ;copy the Extra Segment
                ;address to register AX
INC AX         ;Add 1 to it
MOV ES,AX      ;put result back in ES
```

This instruction sequence gives access to a new segment, 16 bytes up in memory from the previous one.

In Protected mode, however, it would cause a different descriptor to be used in forming memory addresses. The new segment could be anywhere else within the sixteen megabytes of memory!

If you think that this does not represent a problem to you because you use a high-level language, think again! Turbo Pascal does memory calculations like this. It's likely most do something similar. I would expect other products like dBase and Lotus 123 do similar things.

The other problem is with programs that contain hard-coded memory ad-

dresses. For example, any programs that access the IBM PC video RAM directly instead of using the DOS or even the ROM calls cannot run because descriptor numbers greater than 7FFF are not valid; this cuts out hard-coded access to memory locations B000:0000, B800:0000 and so on.

Another 'gotcha' is badly behaved programs that address memory out beyond the defined area in a segment. Many programs stored as COM files are like this. A program is loaded from a COM file of, say, 4000 bytes long. It uses 64 Kbyte of memory starting from its load-point. Such programs often contain instruction sequences like this, too –

```
MOV AX,CS      ;address of code segment
                ;to register AX
ADD AX,0400H   ;add length of
                ;code segment, in paragraphs
MOV DS,AX      ;my data area starts here
MOV ES,AX      ;point ES at it too
```

What is the big catch?

The big catch is this: When the 80286 runs in Real mode, it's behaving (almost) exactly the same as an 8088 or an 8086. It does have some new instructions, and it does detect more errors. Almost all software written for an 8088 or an 8086 (or 80186 or 80188) computer system will produce the same results on a similarly-configured 80286 system provided it's not dependant on instruction timings or dependant on undefined features of the 8088 (or other) CPU.

Since it's emulating an 8086, there is a lot which runs on it: PC-DOS, MS-DOS, Lotus 123, dBase, Multimate, Samna, WordStar, Lattice C, Digital Research's PL/I-86, CP/M-86, Concurrent DOS, Page-maker, Ventura – all your favourite PC software.

Writing programs for both environments

You will need some additional software tools; if you use a high-level language, you will need compatible versions. If you write in Assembler, and use instruction sequences like this –

```
Albert segment 'code'
assume cs:Albert,ds:victoria,es:victoria
mov ax,seg victoria  ;get segment
                     ;address
mov es,ax            ;copy to segment
                     ;registers
mov ds,ax
```

you shouldn't have any problem. When you link for Real mode operation, segment addresses can be incorporated in the EXE file; when you link for Protected-mode operation, the linker can include details of

the segments (length, type and so on) to enable the operating system to establish the required descriptor tables.

The good news

The 80386 (used in the Model 80, the Compaq 386, and others) is capable of running in 'virtual 8086' mode. This provides the capability to run 8086 programs while the 80386 is in Protected mode. In this V86 mode, the 80386 used the values in the segment registers as paragraph addresses in the same way as the 8086 does.

Although the 80386 does not use address translation involving the segment registers (as it and the 80286 do in Real mode), it does have the additional capability of paging, and so has page tables which allow the V86 addresses to be translated to any address in virtual memory. This address translation allows more than one V86 task to be run concurrently in a multitasking environment.

It's rumoured that Intel is developing a new CPU with 80386 software capability, and which is a plug-in replacement for the 80286. All we need now is the software!

In summary

The 80286 cannot run PC-DOS/MS-DOS software because of its different memory architecture. There could be some specific exceptions to this, but it's a pretty good guide.

The 80286 cannot run software that directly accesses video RAM because it cannot respond to the hard-coded addresses used. Therefore, we should not expect OS/2 to run DOS applications in Protected mode, although it might do so by using CPU-reset hardware to get back to Real mode.

Because of its limitation, I do not expect the 80286 to have a long life. If I were buying a new machine now, I would look to one of the 80386 machines in preference to a PC/AT, if I thought I might possibly want to run Real-mode software under a multitasking operating system. The extra speed would merely be a rather nice bonus. □

References

IN WRITING this article, I have referred to *Inside the 80286* by Ed Strauss, published by Prentice Hall, and Intel's *80386 Programmers' Reference Manual*. I obtained both from McGill's Newsagency (some newsagency!) at 187 Elizabeth St, Melbourne. I recommend both to those with a fairly strong technical bent (and a strong wallet).

Part 1

BEHIND HYPERCARD

HERE ARE QUITE a few computer journalists more enthusiastic than I am about HyperCard – and yet I think it's one hell of a program. Gareth Powell at the Sydney Morning Herald, for instance, promotes it as the most important program of the decade. I'm not sure that I would go out on a limb this far, but HyperCard is obviously revolutionary ... and also interesting. So even if the revolution fizzles, the fascination might remain.

One thing is for sure; you are not going to waste your time by learning about HyperCard. At the very least it is certainly the foretaste of programs to come. So if you're a Macintosh user with even the slightest interest in discovering how future data management programs will work, you should spend a few hours looking 'behind the scenes' of HyperCard and digging into its programming language HyperTalk.

This is such revolutionary software that some of the more showy features have tended to disguise important innovations that lie behind. For instance, HyperCard provides the novice with a gentle pathway into programming – an aspect which is quite unusual with substantial procedural languages. If you want to write anything worthwhile in C or Pascal or dBase III then you've got to sit down for two or three months and learn a mass of very esoteric commands and syntax *before* you can create code remotely worthwhile. Nine out of ten writers of Basic probably never write anything of any use to anyone. But HyperCard is different.

At the basic level, the program automatically programs itself through clicking and linking. It's not the first Mac program to do this, but it is the best. You can take this automated programming process a significant step further with very few lines of handwritten code – and you'll be capable of doing this by the time you finish this article.

HyperCard is undoubtedly revolutionary, but this extraordinary complex 'language' is probably the easiest to program. In fact, Stewart Fist will have you writing your first program before you finish Part 1 – and there are still 3 to come!

This is what is so amazing – this extraordinarily complex 'language' is probably the easiest to program in a worthwhile way.

HyperTalk

There's a lot been written about HyperTalk as an 'object oriented' language like the famous SmallTalk, but it is not a true 'object orientated language', and it also owes plenty to the standard single-structure languages like dBase II.

Apple admits that HyperCard is not a 'classical object-oriented programming system, although it implements some object-oriented concepts, such as passing messages and having objects.' Are you any the wiser? Hang on – you will be!

Apple will soon have the *HyperCard Script Language Guide* in print if you really want to get deeply involved, but at the time of writing the manual is only available the draft level – and it has some mistakes. Danny Goodman's book, *The Complete HyperCard Handbook* still hasn't arrived at this time, although I hope to be reviewing it by the time this series is in print.

The only way to understand HyperCard is to play with it. And the only way to investigate HyperTalk is to go inside, have a look around and make some changes – so first of all make a copy of the disk HyperCard and Stacks and use that as a tutorial disk. Fire up the copy, and let's have a nosey around inside.

Clicking on the HyperCard icon should bring you up on the Home Card, and by clicking the left arrow at the bottom of the card you will go straight to the last card in the Home Stack – the User Preferences card.

Click on the Scripting radio button at the bottom – this provides you with 'tools' to enable you to create and alter stacks and script. Notice that the top menu bar has changed; along with the Tools menu there's now one labelled Objects. Why this emphasis on Objects?

HyperCard programs aren't flowing streams which start at one point and finish at another, rather they are collections of discrete code modules (called 'handlers'). Each module is part of a 'script' attached to an 'object'. There can be hundreds or thousands of handlers in a HyperCard stack, each of which performs its task quite independent of the others – although they communicate with each other by sending 'messages'.

The word 'object' is used in an analogous way. There is nothing physical about these objects. HyperCard has five different types of 'object' – Buttons, Fields, Cards, Backgrounds and Stacks – plus two quasi-objects (Home Stack, which is just a special form of stack, and the HyperCard program itself which often acts like an object).

You activate an object (usually, by clicking on it or sending it a command/message) and its handler code sends a message through a predefined pathway to another object. If this object's handler recognises the message some action is usually initiated.

For instance, go to the Home Card and click on the Phone icon. You jump instantly to the Phone Stack ready to insert a new phone number. Your click within the active area (a transparent button) over the Phone icon initiated a message from the attached handler. This message then flowed up through the various levels of the program until it was registered by another object (in this case HyperCard itself) and this triggered the switch to the Phone Stack.

The action has to be predictable – in other words there must be some order to the sequence of objects, and this is where the hierarchy comes in. Messages flow upwards from low-level objects (buttons and fields) to higher levels – and the higher the level the more widespread the action.

Obviously the handler that actually made the switch between Home and Phone stacks needs to be at a higher hierarchical level, since its effect (the switch to a new stack) is felt by all the cards, backgrounds, buttons and fields below it.

Think of it as an inverted tree structure with one Home Stack at the top trunk level, a number of Stacks below on main branches, then many Cards each with Background, Fields and Buttons. It's a matter of one Supreme Commander, a few Generals, many Lieutenants, hundreds of Corporals and thousands of Privates.

Change back to the Home Card and we'll have a look at the the script that initiated the action that swapped you to the Phone stack. From the Tools menu, select the Button tool in the middle of the top row. Then click on the Phone icon to select this button (you'll see a rectangle of walking ants), then go to the Button Info bar of the Object menu and click again.

In the dialog box which now appears, click on the Script panel, and this will reveal the handler responsible for the action. The script attached to this button only has one handler that begins at the keyword 'on' and finishes with the line beginning with 'end' –

```
on mouseUp
  go to stack "Phone"
  visual effect zoom
end mouseUp
```

It couldn't be much simpler, could it? It doesn't take a college education to realise that 'mouseUp' is the release phase of clicking the mouse, and that 'go to

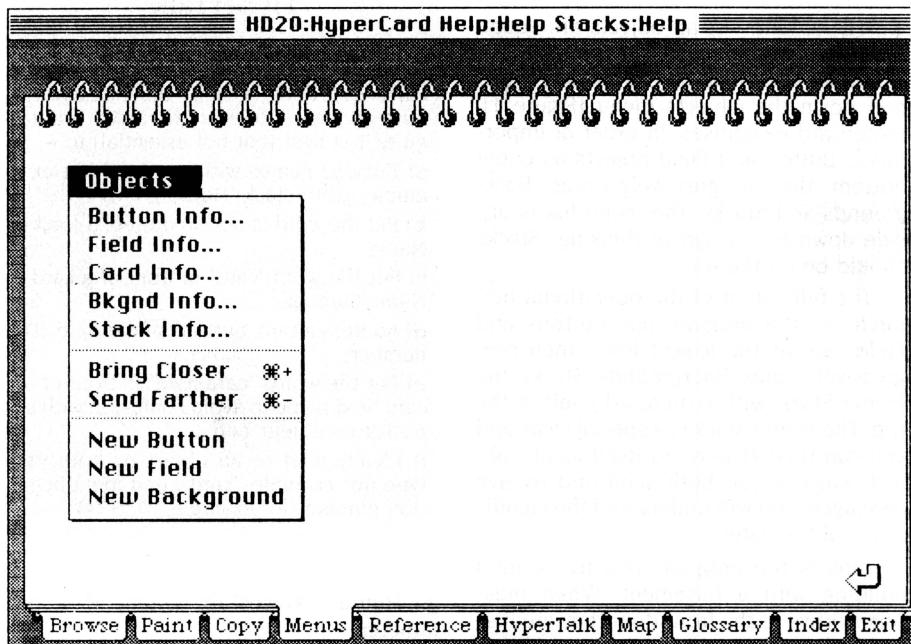


Figure 1. In HyperCard, not all objects are equal. There's a rough sort of heirarchy in the status of objects – Buttons and Fields are at the lowest level, then progressively Cards, Backgrounds, Stacks, the Home Stack, with HyperCard itself at the top. The Home Stack is a special case, and you can treat HyperCard itself as an 'object' since it can both send and receive messages.

'Phone' is the message (the command) that causes the stacks to swap. This issued message has the messageName 'go', (which is also a HyperTalk command) and so in this case it is captured and used by the HyperCard program itself (but it need not be). 'Phone' is the parameter. The word 'to' and the quote signs are superfluous, and are included to make the script more readable and avoid ambiguity.

There's also a line of code here which creates the visual zoom effect, but it's not necessary for the system to work. It is, however, a good indicator of how English-like HyperCard's command language is, and this makes it easy to learn. In fact, we can do some programming ourselves while we are here.

Notice that the cursor assumes the I-beam style (as in MacWrite) whenever it is in the script area. This shows that you can add, modify or delete command lines in exactly the same way as you would change the text of a letter.

Try it now. After the 'on mouseUp' line, insert a new command line that just says 'beep' (no quotes) or 'beep 3', if you want to be flashy. Click on the OK panel, de-select the button icon in the Tools menu and try it out. From now on the Phone icon, and only the Phone icon, will sound

the bell (once or three times) when you select it. See how easy programming is!

While you are at the Home Card, use the Objects menu to have a look at the script associated with the Home Card itself, its background and the Home Stack. You'll see an increasing degree of complexity as you get further up the heirarchy, as you would expect.

At the Card level there are three script modules ('handlers') to do with updating the time on the card and showing or hiding the Copyright notice. The Copyright notice only appears at boot-up.

The Background script has been set to handle things like the non-appearance of the message box and the menu bar when the Home stack is opened, and the Stack script is primarily concerned with external commands ('XCMD' in the jargon – from C, Pascal or the Mac assembly language) and the storing of information such as the User's Name and preference level.

But, just as the higher levels are obviously hard to understand, the lower levels are certainly easier than you expected, aren't they? You might not be able to reprogram a Home Stack in your first few days, but you can manipulate buttons and fields, and there's a progressive learning path through this program.

Hierarchy

In HyperCard, not all objects are equal. There's a rough sort of hierarchy in the status of objects which you will see if you pull down the Objects menu (Figure 1). HyperCard recognises, in order of importance, Button and Field objects as equal bottom, then progressively Cards, Backgrounds and Stacks. The menu list is upside down to my way of thinking; Stacks should be on the top.

The full extent of the operational hierarchy of the program has Buttons and Fields are at the lowest level, then progressively Cards, Backgrounds, Stacks, the Home Stack, with HyperCard itself at the top. The Home Stack is a special case, and you can treat HyperCard itself as an 'object' since it can both send and receive messages. You will understand the significance of this later.

Think of the program as a five-storied building with a basement. When messages arrive at the front door they are first checked at the lowest level to see whether they are intended for this floor. If they are not intercepted here they are passed on to the next floor, then to the next, and so on until some may finally trickle through to the big boss at the top and he deals primarily with 'commands'.

Mouse messages come through the sewer, so these are first checked at the basement level (Buttons and Fields), while most other messages come in at the street-level (Cards). But however they enter the building, messages always move upwards, if they are not intercepted.

The internal activity of HyperCard all depends on 'messages'. For instance if you click down on the mouse button this action sends a system message called 'mouseDown'. When you let the button up, the message 'mouseUp' is broadcast. If you don't do anything at all, the program constantly broadcasts the message 'idle'.

The term 'message' here is used in a wider fashion than the term 'command' (builtin keywords initiate some action). It often includes both a command and a parameter, such as 'go' (the command) 'Home' (the parameter). It also includes system-event messages sent as a result of some action (like clicking the mouse), 'function calls' (builtin calculations which return some value to the initiating handler), and message or function names that you have made up during scripting to trigger some action further up the object hierarchy. Many messages have parameters attached, but they don't need to. Here are some examples of messages –

HyperTalk

HYPERTALK IS A very flexible language. It doesn't worry about upper or lower case, nor does it have an excessively strict syntax. However, to avoid ambiguity it is best (but not essential) to –

- a) Enclose names within quotes (for example, go to stack 'Home').
- b) Put the word 'stack' in front of a stack-Name.
- c) Put the word 'card' in front of a card-Name/number.
- d) Address a card, button or field by its ID number.
- e) Put the words 'card field' in front of a card field name to avoid confusion with a background field, and
- f) Ideally refer to an object by both its type (for example, 'card') and identification number (for example, ID 5734)

go Home – HyperTalk command + parameter

mouseUp – system 'event' message

xyz – message to author-defined handler that will start with 'on xyz'

average (Len1, Len2) – function call + parameters

nameLength (lastName) – author-defined function call + parameter.

MouseUp or mouseDown (event) messages flow first to the topmost button or field attached to the area under the cursor (they are directed to the appropriate button or field by the program, since it keeps track of where the cursor is).

The system-event messages mouseEnter, mouseWithin, and mouseLeave are generated within the program and flow to the appropriate button or field object. But these are post-facto (after the event) messages, and they are sent after the program has already decided which field or button the cursor has entered/left.

The mouseLeave message is sent only to the button or field that the cursor has vacated – and then it passes on up the hierarchy until it finds a handler that needs a 'mouseLeave' message.

If they aren't recognised at the Button or Field level, all messages pass to the appropriate Card, then to the Background, the Stack, the Home Stack and on the HyperCard. Messages can be intercepted at any level where the appropriate script handler exists, and they can act from any level.

For instance, a handler which puts the time into a card field, doesn't have to be at the field level, it can be at the Card, Background or Stack level just as easily –

and at these levels its influence will be progressively wider.

When you are programming, it is usually your decision as to which level you will write a handler – and you decide this on the basis of how wide you want the influence of the handler to be felt.

System messages aren't the only kind. As we have seen there are also HyperTalk command statements, function calls, and also you can type messages into the message box by pulling down the Go menu. This is actually a form of direct programming.

Try writing 'go to next card' in the message box. You'll see that the reaction is exactly the same as if you'd clicked on the appropriate arrow/button – because the issued message was exactly the same.

Your keyboard-entered message came in at the second (Card) level, then travelled up through the system until it reached HyperCard itself. At this level the 'go' message was recognised as a command and the 'next card' parameter was acted upon.

If you select the Stack Info bar from the Objects menu, then show its script, and write a short useless handler like –

on go

play "boing"

end go

You will find that this short-circuits any messages in the message box like 'go to next card'. If you've got card or background arrow buttons that previously took you to the next card, or the last card, you'll find that they don't work either. Everytime you try, the system just 'boings'.

Taking control

This is a trivial example with important consequences, because it means that you can write your own handlers using a messageName identical to a HyperTalk command, and steal control from this command. You can use the command for your own purposes, then pass it on again, if you wish.

But we are jumping ahead too quickly!

Objects don't necessarily need to have scripts associated with them. For instance, from the Home Card, select the Field tools (right in Tools menu) then click on the small field that holds the Time on the bottom right of the card. Go to the Objects menu, select Field Info, then click on Script and you'll see that this 'field' object doesn't have its own script.

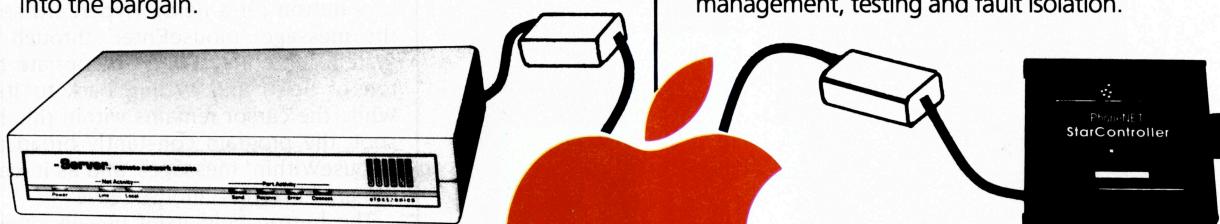
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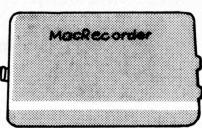
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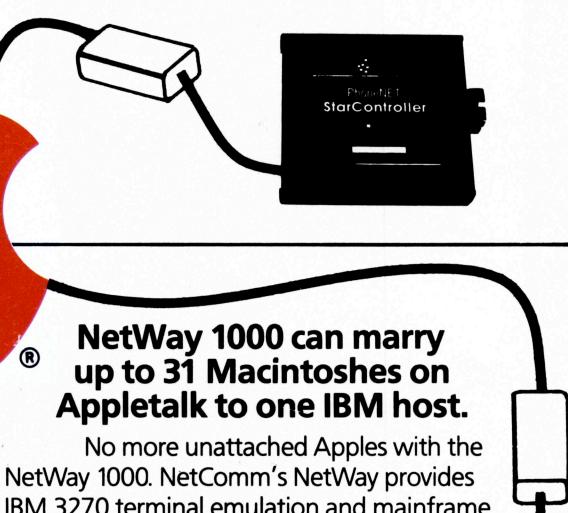
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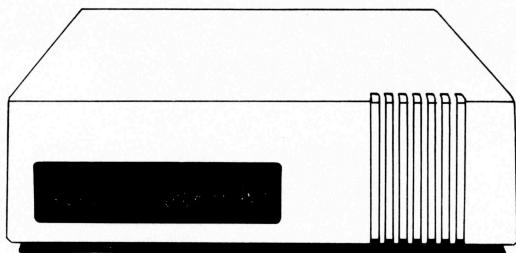
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INSTRUCTION SET HYPERCARD

field just for display. Clicking on the time or changing the numbers is not intended to initiate any action through the system.

This object (a field) is a passive receiver of messages originated by the hardware clock chip. However there must be a script handler somewhere to intercept the clock messages and cause the numbers to be displayed – and you'll find this in the Home Card script. It could have been higher at the Home Stack level.

So some objects have no script, and can therefore send no messages. At the other end of the spectrum, some parts of the HyperCard system are constantly sending messages, and other objects are constantly receiving them and interpreting them through script handlers.

If you are moving the cursor about on the screen and you enter an area allocated to a button (or a field), HyperCard sends the message 'mouseEnter' through the system (entering at the appropriate button or field) and cycling back to itself. While the cursor remains within this hot-spot, the program constantly broadcasts 'mouseWithin' messages, and as it leaves the area it sends 'mouseLeave'.

The button field itself usually doesn't do anything with this stream of cursor-position messages because its handler has been set to look for the mouseUp command of a click unless it has been deliberately changed – which is what we will now do!

For no other reason than to get comfortable with modifying scripts, find your way again back to the script handler belonging to the Phone button on the Home Stack, and change the two 'mouseUp' references to 'mouseLeave'. Exit the script, re-set Tools, then pass your cursor over the Phone icon. Your change now activates the stack swap as you withdraw the cursor from the button area; you don't need to click.

Here's another fun one. Select the Time field on the Home Card, and enter the three line script –

```
on mouseWithin
```

```
beep
```

```
end mouseWithin
```

Now whenever your cursor is within the Time field area on the bottom left of the card, the bell will sound.

Customisation at last!

In Part 2 we'll look further at messages and handlers, and get a better idea of the way different messages are handled within the system, and what this means to the programmer. □

HARDWARE HACKING

Adding a reset switch

FOR THE FIRST installment of 'Hardware Hacking' we will show you how to add a reset button to your PC. If you do much programming, you'll see the immediate worth of a reset button. When you make a mistake in your program, you usually wind up with a crash of some kind; you lose control of the computer. You can normally recover from these little incidents by the software reset method of pressing Control, Alt, and Delete, all at the same time. The computer beeps, the system reloads from the disk, you can reload the files you are working on (you *did* save them before running the program, didn't you!) and all is ready for you to try again.

However, if you're not so lucky, you may discover that the crash has disabled the keyboard, so everything, including the Ctrl-Alt-Del combination, is ignored. This occurs for one of two reasons. The keyboard generates an interrupt whenever any key is pressed.

(Interrupt: a microprocessor feature that forces the main program to drop what it's doing when some prearranged external event occurs. The external event is attended to, and then normal program execution resumes where it left off.)

The keyboard interrupt sends the microprocessor off to an area of low memory where it expects to find the address of the machine code routine that handles the incoming data from the keyboard. If this memory area has been corrupted by the crash (a common occurrence), the processor goes spinning off into never-never land. Result: no keyboard. The keyboard also gets zonked if you've temporarily disabled the processor's interrupt function as part of your program, and then the program crashes. No interrupts – no keyboard.

The traditional way to recover from loss of keyboard is to reach for the big red switch and turn the whole computer off,

Welcome to a new series of articles by Tom Moffat aimed at making your computer easier to use, and giving you some insights into its operation. Don't worry if you're not an electronics freak, you'll be able to handle this, and you're certain to find a few sneaky tricks you can pull on your PC.

Minor surgery

To make use of this facility you will have to perform some minor surgery with an electric drill and a soldering iron. But before you do anything, it's necessary to find out if the system board on your computer has been pre-wired for a reset button.

I have been involved with two IBM compatibles, and I've been able to put reset buttons in both. The first machine, which belonged to a former employer, quickly became known as a Brand X. This machine made its way into Australia via Taiwan, Hong Kong and New Zealand, and it appeared to be thoroughly illegal. It had exact copies of the IBM ROM memory chips, including Basic-In-ROM. (That's a definite no-no!) And the circuit boards, case, disk drives, everything, were totally devoid of serial numbers or even maker's names. It was as if the computer had just fallen to Earth from outer space.

The other machine, the one I use now, is a Unitron. This company has produced both Apple and IBM compatible machines. They are very popular in Tasmania, particularly among government users, they're priced right, and well supported by their dealer. But they seem to be a mystery in the rest of Australia for some reason. Both machines are housed in the standard big steel IBM type case, with a bonnet that opens up like in a car so you can get inside and fiddle around.

The interesting point is that the Brand X and the Unitron appear to have very similar system boards. They could have come out of the same factory (maybe they did!). The Brand X system board takes 256 kilobytes of memory and you need an extra card to expand it. The Unitron takes a full 640 Kbyte on the system board; no extra card is required. But in the area around the card slots and logic chips, they seem to be almost identical. And they both have easy connections for reset buttons. Similar system boards seem to be fairly com-

and then on again. This works, but it isn't really too good for the computer, or the monitor. In fact, it isn't really wise to switch any electronic device off and on unnecessarily, even a TV set. It stresses the components, and in particular picture tubes.

Most computers in the past had some type of button that could be pressed to restart the computer from scratch without needing to turn it off and on again. But IBM apparently didn't see a need for this, and instead opted for Power On Reset which would only occur when the machine was first switched on. However, many makers of IBM compatibles have seen the light. They haven't installed hardware reset buttons as such, but they have put circuitry on their system boards to allow easy installation of a hardware reset.

mon in other brands of compatibles as well. So you could very well be in luck.

To find out if you can easily add a reset button, remove the cover from your computer, or open the bonnet if it has that type of case. Now look just behind the rightmost card slot and see if there is a little connector with two pins sticking straight up. It may be marked JP1. If it is present, success is likely, and it's time for a trip to an electronics shop. You will need to buy the following:

1 normally-open push button switch;
1 100 ohm resistor (1/4 watt will do);
1 meter of multi-conductor ribbon cable;
8 Molex pins (you only need two, but you may wreck some);

A bit of plastic tubing that will fit over the Molex pins.

To save further money you should now find a friend who's into electronics, and borrow the following:

A small soldering iron and some solder;
An electric drill, with a bit to fit your push button;
Side cutters and long-nose pliers;
The friend (who might enjoy watching you drill holes in your computer).

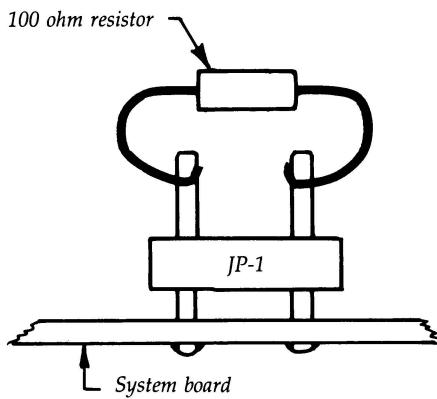


Figure 1. To test if a reset button can be fitted to your computer, fire it up, with the cover open. When it's all properly booted and sitting there waiting for action, take the 100 ohm resistor in your fingers and carefully bridge it across the connector pins. Don't worry about getting electrocuted, the voltages here are very low. If all is well, when the resistor makes contact the computer should beep, spin its disk and reboot.

What happens during a reset?

THE RESET CIRCUIT is one of the most extensive in the IBM PC and most other computers as well. When you press that button, or when the machine powers up, a pulse is generated that propagates to just about every major chip in the machine. In the IBM PC, it comes into the main microprocessor on pin 21, which goes briefly high and then low again. This causes the program counter to begin executing instructions from address FFFF0 (hexadecimal) which is 16 bytes below the top of the PC's 1 megabyte addressing capability. (In a CP/M computer using a Z80 processor, execution starts at address 0000 after reset, the opposite end of memory. How about that!)

There just happens to be a ROM chip in the IBM's highest address space; in fact it occupies the top 8 Kbyte of addressable memory. This is generally referred to as the Boot ROM or the BIOS ROM (basic input/output ROM) and if you look inside the computer you'll find it sitting in a socket near the middle of the system board. There will probably be an identifying sticker on it.

The sixteenth instruction from the top will tell the microprocessor to jump somewhere lower in the ROM where there are instructions which actually do something useful. The first thing that happens is called POST or Power On Self Test. This checks the memory, figures out how much there is, and then tests various slots and connectors to see what else is hooked up to the computer. If all is okay, the ROM software energizes the default disk drive which reads in the DOS. With DOS in memory, control is passed to it, sign on messages appear, you're asked to enter the date and time, and at last the DOS prompt (A> or C>) tells you that your wish is the computer's command.

At the end of the memory test, the BIOS Rom writes '1234' into an area of low memory. Then, after a software reset (Ctrl-Alt-Del), the BIOS checks for this value in that location, and if it is there it bypasses the memory test, saving lots of time. Upon hardware reset (your new button), the BIOS may or may not take into account the '1234', depending on what version of BIOS you are using. This explains why some computers do the full memory test on reset, and others don't.

Now back to the computer. Fire it up, with the cover open. When it's all properly booted and sitting there waiting for action, take your 100 ohm resistor in your fingers and carefully bridge it across the two pins of the connector you found earlier; one wire to each pin. Don't worry about getting electrocuted, the voltages here are very low. If all is well, when the resistor makes contact the computer should beep, spin its disk and reboot exactly as if you had used Ctrl-Alt-Del on the keyboard. The computer may or may not conduct its power-on memory test; it depends on the brand of computer.

If this test works, try it again, just to make sure. If the test doesn't work, that is, if nothing happens when you bridge the connector with the resistor, then the easiest course would be to give the whole project a miss. It could be that the little connector has some other purpose in your computer. We used the resistor to test it, instead of a bit of wire, so the resistor would act as a 'safety valve' if it shorted the wrong thing. But if the connector is there, in the right place, you would have to be pretty unlucky for it not to work!

Where to put it!

If all is okay, you must now decide where you want to mount the reset button. In the first of these modifications I made, to the Brand X computer, I found two blank plastic panels, right on the front, that could be removed to allow the installation of extra disk drives. I simply drilled a hole in one of them (dead easy) and mounted the switch there. The only trouble was, it was very visible, and people would come along and say 'What does that do?' and then press it (groan). The computer would, of course, reboot, sending some big WordStar file or something off into oblivion. Not a good idea.

The Unitron installation was a bit more discreet. This machine's case has its main front panel protruding a few millimeters over a smaller surface near the bottom. The button was mounted on this smaller surface where it is somewhat hidden by the larger overhanging front panel. The spot chosen was near the left hand side of the computer. See the side view in Figure 1. It was necessary to temporarily remove the speaker bracket to do this, but it made a nice neat installation. A third option would be to mount the switch on the rear of the computer, where you could find it by feel.

Before doing any work on the computer, *be sure* to remove the power cord from the mains socket, and for double safety remove the other end of the power cord from the computer. As well you'll need to remove cables to monitors, printers and so on, so you can have free access to the main system unit. Also, *beware*, if drilling in the steel cabinet – do not let any filings get into the computer's works. Protect the area with plastic bags and masking tape, and make sure it's *absolutely clean* afterwards.

If all is well, when the resistor makes contact the computer should beep, spin its disk and reboot exactly as if you had used Ctrl-Alt-Del on the keyboard.

Wiring

Now to the easy part, wiring it up. With your fingernails, separate two strands of the ribbon cable from the rest. Measure out enough wire to make it from your button position to the connector on the system board. Leave plenty of slack so the wire can be neatly run beside or under the circuit boards. Referring to Figure 2, solder one conductor to each lug on the button; then install the button into its hole. On the other end, solder a Molex pin to each wire. Molex Pins are really meant to be used in home-made circuit boards as makeshift integrated circuit sockets, but they slide nicely over the little pins sticking out of the system board as well. The idea is to avoid the need to solder directly to the system board pins.

Once the Molex pins are on, slide a bit of your plastic tubing over each one to prevent them shorting against each other, and then slide one Molex pin onto each of the system board pins (use your long nose pliers for this). You can toss out the 100 ohm resistor – that was only for the initial trial to see if the system board connector was what it appeared to be. But hang onto

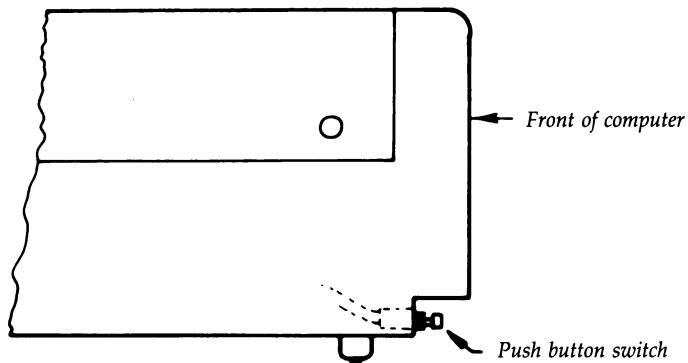


Figure 2. The reset button was mounted near the front left side of the computer – it was necessary to temporarily remove the speaker bracket to do this, but it made a nice neat installation.

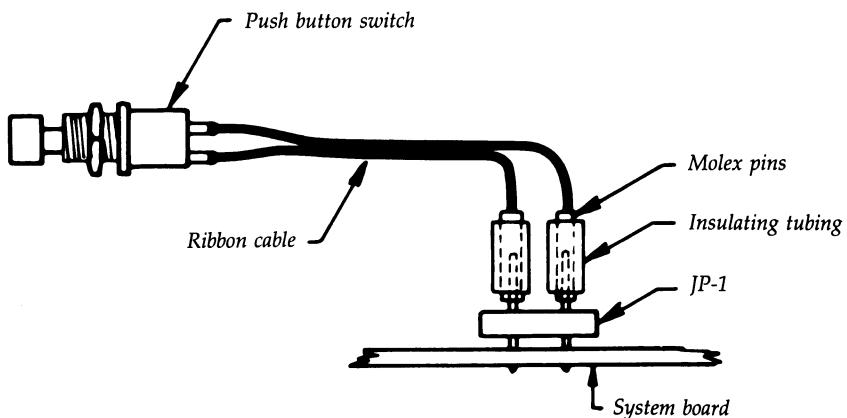


Figure 3. After measuring out enough wire to make it from your chosen button position to the connector on the system board, solder one conductor to each lug on the button; then install the button into its hole. On the other end, solder a Molex pin to each wire.

the rest of the Molex pins and the ribbon cable; we've got another interesting project coming up next month!

Smoke test time. Restore the power cord, make sure your monitor is hooked up, put in your DOS disk and switch on. The computer should fire up as normal and eventually sit there on the DOS prompt waiting for something to happen. Well, it's now in for a shock. Press your new button and the computer should beep and DOS should reload, just as if the machine had been switched on. Remember, there may or may not be a memory test. On the Brand X, I discovered that a short jab on the button would reboot without the memory test, but if I held it

down for half a second or so it would start the memory test from scratch. I have never figured out why this happened.

You will find your new reset button valuable. I certainly have! For what it's worth the mightiest crash I ever caused on an IBM came about when I was experimenting with the counter/timer chip, writing commands directly into it. Because of a simple typing error, the commands went somewhere else. When the program was run, the screen filled with flashing rubbish, both disk drives lit up and started spinning, and the speaker made a noise like 'guk-guk-guk'. And of course the keyboard failed. But the trusty reset button brought it all back to life. □

MEMORY MUNCHER

Here's an easy way to simulate the effect of limited memory on an application – a program that eats memory for breakfast (compliments of Andrew Larkin)!

A COMMON PROBLEM for programmers and other computing professionals is trying to determine the behavior of applications and programs in low memory situations. Quite often it can be very difficult to calculate in advance how a certain program will behave when executed in an environment with restricted memory. In order to simulate these circumstances, a programmer would often have to physically remove memory from his or her own computer in order to simulate the effect of limited memory on an application. This technique has several limitations.

Firstly, it is very inconvenient – there are a few PCs around that seem to be designed to discourage attempts to get at add-in boards. Besides which, extracting add-in boards and memory chips from a computer can be a pain – bruised and scraped knuckles trying to retrieve that rogue screw that deliberately dived into the bowels of the PC on its kamikaze mission to wipe out something.

The second limitation is that, in most cases, you can only disable memory in lumps of 64 kilobytes – which is a very inconsiderate size when trying to simulate more arbitrary memory configurations. There are undoubtedly other ways of restricting the memory available to an application, but I don't use them. I have my own technique – a program that eats memory for breakfast. I call it Munch.

Munch is a 9-byte program that 'gobbles up' lumps of memory. While it is not the smallest program that I have ever written, it is certainly getting close. For those who know and love machine code, I could have squeezed at least another byte or two out of the program, but the result wouldn't have been so easy to explain.

Munch uses a single MS-DOS function call that 'terminates' the program, but retains a specified amount of memory for the program. This function is used frequently by applications such as SideKick

and many device drivers (like the Microsoft Mouse driver MOUSE.COM) that get 'installed' in memory. The function is commonly known as Terminate and Stay Resident or TSR.

Here is the complete assembly language source code to Munch –

```
mov    ah, 31h
mov    al, 00h
mov    dx, ffh
int    21h
```

If you have a Macro Assembler then you will have to work out the segmentation and other unimportant details for yourself. A brief explanation of what it does: the first line sets the ah register to the value of 31 hexadecimal; this is the TSR function number for MS-DOS. The second line sets the al register to 0; this is the return code for the program. The return code is also known as the error level and can be tested using the MS-DOS batch command language (batch files). Line three sets the amount of memory to be retained when the program finishes; this value is in terms of paragraphs of memory. A paragraph of memory is 10 hex (or 16 decimal) bytes.

These are the sizes (and parameters) for dx that I've found the most useful: 256 Kbyte (3fff), 64K (fff), 16K (3ff), 4K (ff), and 1K (3f).

Notice that the value to be placed in to the dx register is one less than the exact number of paragraphs in the given memory size. This is to compensate for a 16 byte overhead on each memory block in MS-DOS. These header blocks are used by MS-DOS as part of its internal memory management scheme. The last line of the program performs the familiar int 21h software interrupt to MS-DOS, the standard MS-DOS interface.

I normally keep a complete set of Munch programs around on my hard disk. To distinguish them, I include the memory

size of the tool in the program's name. For example, a 4 Kbyte version of Munch is normally called something like MUNCH0-04.COM, while a 256 Kbyte version would be called MUNCH256.COM.

An improvement that you could make to Munch would be to set the al register to the memory size in kilobytes that is being taken out. This has the limitation though of not being able to handle numbers greater than 255, but I am sure that you could work out something.

With the five different sizes of Munch given above, it is possible to get almost any memory size accurate to about 1 kilobyte – which is accurate enough for most.

Use of the program is very, very complicated: just run it. Each time that you invoke the program, Munch gobbles up the specified amount of memory. To recover the memory, simply restart the computer.

As most IBM compatible PCs are supplied with the programmers tool called DEBUG, the 'instructions' in Listing 1 should work for everyone.

```
C:\>debug
-a 100
xxxx:0100 mov ah,31
xxxx:0102 mov al,00
xxxx:0104 mov dx,ff
xxxx:0107 int 21
xxxx:0109 [Press Return Here]
-n munch004.com
-r cx
CX 0000
:9
-w
Writing 0009 bytes
-q
C:\>
```

Listing 1. Step-by-step instructions for creating a 4 Kbyte version of Muncher (with DEBUG). All you have to type are the commands that are underlined. Simple, eh?

You can use the MS-DOS CHKDSK (Check Disk) utility to find out how much memory is available to programs. Also use this utility to check that Munch is working correctly. When calculating your memory requirements, don't forget that there are 1024 bytes in a kilobyte instead of 1000 as you might expect.

By the way, it is not nice to place things like this in people's AUTOEXEC.BAT files, alright? □

HELP



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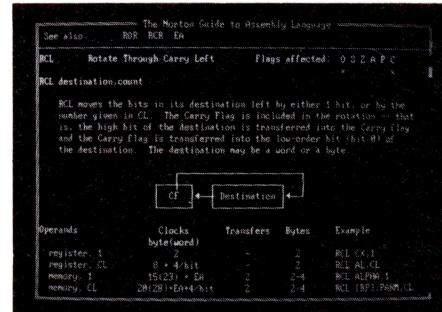
BASIC: • Popular Dialects: BASICA, QuickBASIC, TurboBASIC, • Statements and functions • Tables: Line drawing characters, ASCII chart, Extended keyboard codes, Run-time error numbers, Command line switches, Operators, precedence order, and more!

C: • Language description: including programming statement operators, data types and structures. • Library functions: library and built in, from write to abort • Preprocessor Directives: commands, usage and syntax • Tables: ASCII, line drawing, keyboard scan codes, error codes, character constants, header files, coercion rules, operator precedence, and more!

Pascal: • Turbo Pascal: a thorough description, including program syntax, operators, data types and structures • Library Procedures and functions • Tables: ASCII, line drawing, keyboard scan codes, error codes, compiler directives, reserved words, internal data formats, and more.

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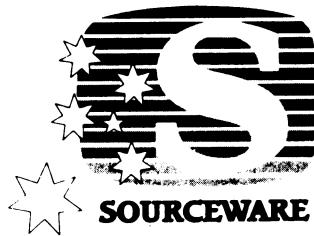
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Price: \$199 taxed

A new videotex software product which can be programmed to

remember Viatel commands, Conn-x, and the Dataplex DPX-224 are being bundled by Sourceware.

Conn-x can store complex commands to enter Viatel, reducing user access to only a few strokes. It also allows videotex graphics to be displayed on a monochrome screen. The DPX-224 is capable of replacing four conventional dial modems. It operates at speeds of 300 to 2400 bps and support Viatel, Austpac, Aftel, Midas, Ausinet and all other asynchronous and synchronous database communications services. It also supports the Microcomputer Network Protocol (MNP). A second version of the Conn-X package is available for Hayes compatible modems.

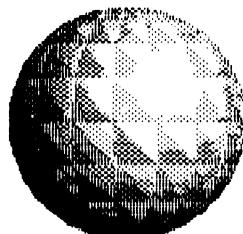
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Gemstone 110

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Price: See below

Amstrad CPC users will be pleased to know that Living Image has released a collection of 110 Amstrad programs written in Basic. All programs are easy to

follow and are accompanied by remarks within the programs and instructions.

Living Image says it encourages programmers to take subroutines out of the programs and use them in their own. The programs include utilities, business, educational, graphics and games. The complete collection (2 disks) is \$38.95; programs 1 to 50, \$20.95 (1st disk), and programs 51 to 110, \$22.95 (2nd disk). Order from Living Image, PO Box 409, Elizabeth Centre 5112 SA.



Elite

Personal Computer Software

Phone: (02) 923 2899 taxed

Price: \$1539

Elite is a desk top publishing package for the office environment. It is designed for use by a person able to use word processing and does not require any knowledge of typesetting techniques or terminology.

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Lewis Pay Pack

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The Lewis Pay Pack (reviewed in YC '87) has been upgraded. More than 50 new features have been added to the payroll package including: able to calculate holiday records in hours or days, tax averaging for commissions and bonuses and birthday reminders.

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Price: \$750 taxed

Lotus, through distributor Imagineering, has announced that Modern Jazz should now be available. Modern Jazz is a powerful integrated business software package for Apple Macintosh users. It is designed specifically for users who want the benefits of integrated software without having to sacrifice power.

The package combines six functions: worksheet, graphics, database, forms, word processing and communications. Modern Jazz also offers a number of features designed to take advantage of new powerful features to take advantage of Apple's new Macintosh SE and Macintosh II PCs.

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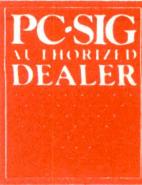
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The following is a small selection from the library:

□ #5, #730 & #1015 PC-FILE+ (3 disk set) ↗

Jim Button's very popular database system. Works with other Buttonware software eg PC-TYPE, PC-CALC+.

□ #78 & #627 PC-WRITE (2 disk set) ↗ ☆

The famous Shareware word processor from Quicksort. Everything you need in a word processor including spell check.

□ #90 & #594 GENEALOGY ON DISPLAY

Written in BASIC with concern for the novice Genealogist. As well as the expected features eg printing family trees, family group sheets, and descendants charts the program creates parentchild indexes and prints ID numbers.

□ #105 PC PROFESSOR

A very popular tutorial on the BASIC programming language which increases in complexity as the user progresses.

□ #199, #1016 & #1017 PC-CALC+ (3 disk set) ↗ ☆

A new version of the popular and easy to use spreadsheet program from Buttonware.

□ #287 & #288 FILE EXPRESS (2 disk set) ☆

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□ #320 TOUCHTYPE

A colorful way to improve your typing. Suits either PC or newer enhanced keyboards.

□ #403 PC-TUTOR

Ideal for new users to gain an understanding of your PC and how to use it. Checks on your progress with question answer format.

□ #455, #681 & #682 PC-TYPE (3 disk set) ☆

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□ #499 PROCOMM ↗ ☆

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□ #505 PC STYLE ☆

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□ #523 SIDEWRITER

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□ #524 & #525 EXPRESS CALC (2 disk set) ☆

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□ #528 NEW YORK WORD ☆

A sophisticated WP originally written for larger machines. Includes hyphenation and de-hyphenation.

□ #608 AUTOMENU ↗

Magee Enterprises menu management program that has become one of the fastest selling Shareware programs.

□ #641 MAHJONG (Australian author)

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□ #646 AMY'S FIRST PRIMER

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□ #669 & #670 GRAPHTIME II (2 disk set, Australian author) ☆

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□ #687, #688 & #689 IN-CONTROL (3 disk set) (Aust. Version)

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□ #727 POWERMENU ↗ ☆

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□ #728 & #729 HOMEBASE (2 disk set) ☆

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□ #765 GALAXY ↗

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A great way to practice your bridge with up to three partners.

□ #800 BAKER'S DOZEN ☆

A collection of more than 13 utilities from Buttonware.

□ #806 & #807 REMARKABLE GENERAL LEDGER (2 disk set, NZ author)

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□ #819 CROSSWORD CREATOR

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Not only can you produce a Biorythm but compare those of two people for compatibility.

□ #893 PRIVATE LINE AND WEAK LINK

Private Line is an encryption/decryption program. Weaklink connects two PCs via their serial ports and allows file transfers. For example file transfers can be made from the 5.25" drive on one machine to a 3.5" drive on another.

□ #909 & #910 DTIME KEEPER (2 disk set)

Can record time by the minute for a number of employees. Provides current accounts receivable totals and enables automatic billing of standard charges. Menu driven.

□ #918 CAMBRIDGE THOROUGHBRED HANDICAPPER

Attempts to predict future performances by analyzing the past performances. Also gives a betting strategy.

□ #923 PROFESSIONAL REAL ESTATE ANALYST

A set of Lotus macros to analyse the return on a property using up to 14 different measures.

□ #1007 C WINDOW TOOLKIT

Designed for the novice and intermediate C programmers who want full screen, colour, cursor control and windowing capabilities without complex escape sequences or DOS level interrupts. Even more features for the experienced programmers.

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nesses that wish to network their PCs. It includes two half length networking cards that will fit any available half slot in an PC, XT, AT or compatible. The cards work at a maximum 16 MHz. Installation is simple. The manual provides explicit instructions with photos for the Amstrad and IBM PCs. Each SageNet card has two 9-pin D connections, one male, one female. The five meter cable is terminated with one of each sort.

Peripheral Systems

Memory Lane
Peripheral Systems
Phone: (02) 437 6255
Price: \$285 taxed

Memory Lane is a PC software program for finding and consolidating information created by all your other programs. It searches and retrieves the full text of any or all of your files located on your fixed disk.

The program speeds up the creation of new documents by letting you 'cut and paste' existing information from any file into any other file or program. Memory Lane works with word processors, database management systems, spreadsheets, accounting and other programs.

Winter, Summer & California Games
Atari
Phone: (02) 662 7944
Price: \$29.95

Three games for the Atari VCS have been released for the athletically (but computer-bound) inclined. Summer Games is a series of strategy games involving skeet shooting, swimming, rowing and the 100 yard dash. Winter games features Biathlon skiing, bobsled, ski jumps and speed skating, while California Games features skate boarding, surfing and roller skating.

Vaxtel
Micro Computer Technology
Phone: (02) 419 7588
Price: Not supplied

The Vaxtel package for accessing Prestel-type videotext systems now provides for X.25 connections via Austpac in Australia or Pacnet in New Zealand. Vaxtel supports all VT200 and VT300 terminals and operates in colour on the VT225.

The new interface to packet switching network uses the VAX PSI software from DEC. It allows multiple users to simultaneously access various Prestel services. Pages of information can then be saved to disk on the VAX for later recall.

external expansion are featured, as are internal expansion slots and 3½ inch floppy drives. The keyboard has 93 keys and a separate numeric keypad and cursor diamond.

OMEGA
COMPUTER EQUIPMENT

Turbo XT

Omega Computer Corporation
Phone: (02) 819 7415
Price: See below

Omega Computer Corporation has released a range of PCs for stand alone or network purposes. Three machines are being launched initially - a half height Turbo XT, an AT and a 80386 Super Tower.

The Turbo XT has a 10 MHz processor and an 'all in one' main board containing 640 kilobytes of RAM, multi I/O, multi display and FDC. The AT has a 12 MHz 0 wait state processor. The 1 megabyte of 80 ns RAM can be expanded to 16 Mbyte, making it suitable as a fileserver or a very powerful workstation on a network. It is also available in a half height case.

The Super Tower 386 has a 20 MHz, 0 wait state processor. Its 2 Mbyte of 80 ns RAM can be expanded to 16 Mbyte and with its 32-bit bus, the Omega Tower can meet the heaviest fileserver demands. The Turbo XT sells for \$2095, the AT for \$3795, and the Super Tower for \$9595.

Zenith laptops

Zenith Data Systems
Phone: (02) 417 7999
Price: See below

Zenith Data Systems has released three new laptop computers: the Supersport, the Supersport 286 and the Turbosport 386. Processors in the three models range from an 80386 and an 80286 running at 12.6 MHz with zero wait states to an 80C88 running at 8/4.77 MHz.

The clock speed can be switched dynamically and each model has the option to add a numerical co-processor. Standard RAM sizes permit full use of base operating systems, but all three models have 1 Mbyte RAM

option to increase computing power. The three portables offer an optional, detachable keypad to simplify entry and manipulation of data. Each model supports the use of additional cards for networking, high resolution video, or other needs by offering an optional expansion chassis.

The Supersport is priced at either \$3699 or \$5899, depending on floppy drive configuration; the Supersport 286 with a 20 megabyte hard disk costs \$7999, or \$9399 for a 40 Mbyte hard disk. The Turbosport 386 with a 40 Mbyte hard disk is priced at \$11999.

Peripherals and Extensions

CCA Systems
Phone: (02) 660 0077
Price: \$582 taxed

CCA Systems has announced a new 3½ inch, 1.44 megabyte disk drive option for the Compaq Portable III, Portable 386, Desk-Pro 286, DeskPro 386 and Desk-Pro 386/20 models. The third height 3½ inch drive option is available as a primary or secondary (A or B) drive.

p.c. extras

Deluxe Option Board
PC Extras
Phone: (02) 319 2155
Price: \$299 taxed

PC Extras has announced a new version of the option board that can read and write Mac data disks in any PC equipped with a 3½ inch internal drive.

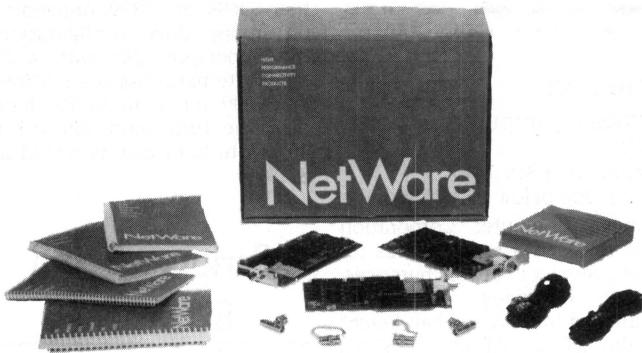
Installed in either an IBM PS/2 Model 25 or 30, or a PC or AT compatible, the new Deluxe Option Board enables these computers to use Mac data disks in their PC's internal 720 kilobyte 3½ inch drive. The standard bus version is shipping now. A version for micro channel will be available in August.

AB5-P256K
Advanced Components
Phone: (03) 739 1198
Price: \$750 taxed

The AB5-P256K is a fully automatic five port auto sharer with internal 256 kilobyte buffering. The unit combines the technologies of both an auto sharer and a 256 Kbyte printer buffer.

It will automatically share one parallel printer with up to five

computers. The unit has five parallel inputs and one parallel output. With the 256 Kbyte buffering, all five inputs can spool in simultaneously. The AB5-P256K also includes a hold button which locks onto any selected computer.



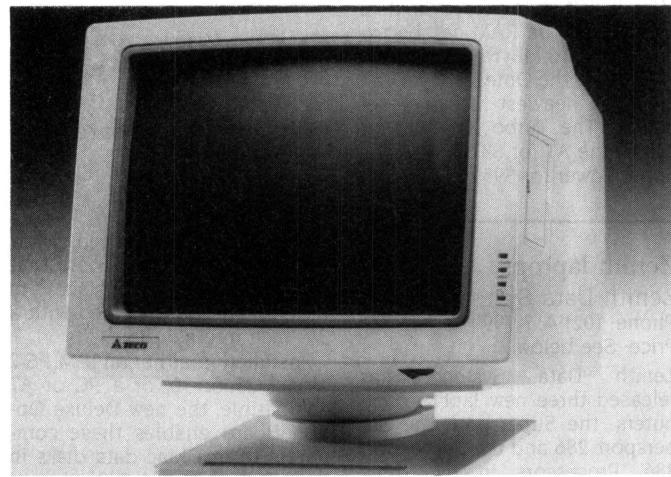
Range of Arcnet products

ADE Computers
Phone: (03) 543 2677
Price: Not supplied

ADE has announced the release of its range of Arcnet local area network (LAN) products. These products include the LAN/A Arcnet cards; a full range of Arcnet network servers; 4, 8, 12 or 16 port active hubs; 4 port passive hubs;

Novell Advance Netware 286; fibre optic or coax interface and network accessories.

The LAN/A network expansion card is the interface between the network and IBM PCs or compatible workstations. The LAN/A hardware complements the Novell Advanced Netware 286 proprietary network operating system.



Multiscan

Teco Australia
Phone: (02) 684 4277
Price: \$1272 taxed

The Multiscan is a 14 inch intelligent monitor. It sits on an angular tilt and swivel base, with an ergonomically designed fascia. The screen has special tinting to reduce glare.

The Multiscan features control switching for text mode on/off, horizontal width on/off, adjustment controls for monitor contrast features, brightness, horizontal/vertical positioning and size. The rear panel of the monitor holds additional controls for the selection of scan mode, analog and digital input facilities.

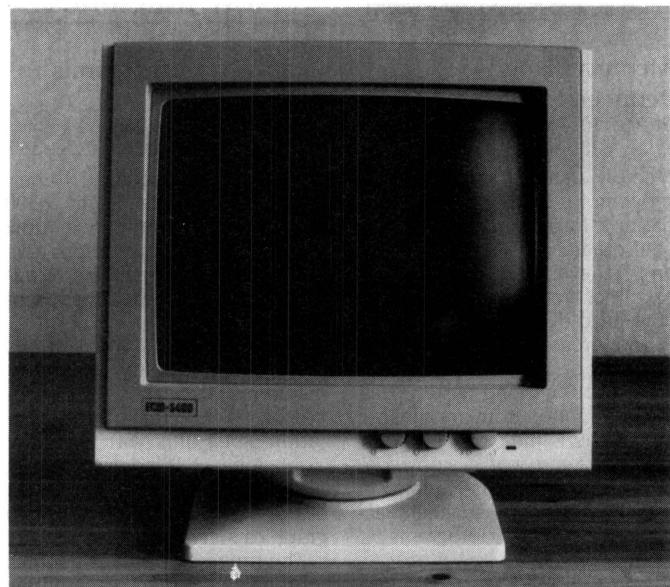
Hyperformance boards

Hypertec
Phone: (02) 819 7222
Price: \$1674 taxed

Hypertec has developed a speed board called Hyperformance that allows the Olivetti M24 and M24SP to run faster than the Olivetti M28. The Hyperformance board has been designed to run with both the Intel 8086 and 8088 processors. Tests show a typical Lotus recalculation which takes 12 seconds on the M24 takes about four seconds with the installation of a Hyperformance board.

P321SLC
Toshiba
Price: \$1522 taxed

Toshiba has released the P321-SLC colour printer; it is the colour version of the 24-pin P321SL. The new printer has a resolution of 360 by 360 dots per inch, operates at 216 characters per second and has a built-in tractor feed. Up to eight colours can be printed. It has complete front panel control. A 32 kilobyte buffer is standard. There is also an automatic single and dual bin cut sheet feed paper feeder.



EGA conversion kit

Electronic Solutions
Phone: (02) 427 4422
Price: \$995 taxed

Electronic Solutions has bundled its multistandard PEGA EGA card with its ESM 5400 colour monitor. The PEGA EGA

card gives compatibility with all established standards and can drive CGA and monochrome monitors if required. The monitor is a high quality microetched screen model with high brilliance phosphors suitable for graphics and Cad work.



NX-1000CL printer

Star Micronics
Phone: (02) 736 1144
Price: \$619 untaxed

Star Micronics has released the NX-1000CL dot matrix colour

printer. It is capable of draft printing at 144 characters per second (cps) and can print at 36 cps in near letter quality mode. It uses a four colour ribbon to mix up to seven colours in the printing process.

The NX-1000CL does not require special colour software to drive it. A wide variety of type styles and fonts are standard. Italic printing can be done in either draft or near letter quality modes.



RDT



TCG

Phone: (02) 699 9569
Price: Not supplied

TCG's new portable RDT data terminal is designed to defy the most extreme operating conditions. The RDT can withstand multiple drops from two meters, is water resistant and can operate normally in temperatures from -20 to +60 degrees Celsius. All external contacts are short circuit protected and it can operate for more than 100 key contact hours on its alkaline battery packs. The RDT communicates through an RS-232 port and can support barcode wands and printers.

SF15B

Star Micronics
Phone: (02) 736 1144
Price: See below

Star Micronics has released bin feeders for two of its 15 inch models, the NB-15 and the NB24-15. The single bin feeders can have an optional second bin. The feeder allows users to print material onto letterhead and other single sheet paper. It is called the SF15B and sells for \$403 untaxed. The second bin, the EB2, sells for \$275 untaxed.

PCII/C

Awanet

Phone: (02) 360 2822
Price: \$2995 untaxed

Awanet has released the PCII/C Plus (for colour) networking board, designed for IBM PC, XT, AT and compatibles. The board supports two users, providing them with 768 kilobytes of memory each.

It is fitted with two 16-bit processors, operates at 10 MHz and supports CGA. It works in conjunction with the latest versions of PC- and MS-DOS. Each board also has a dedicated serial port for each user.

SX Series

Computec

Phone: (03) 882 1326
Price: Not supplied

The SX Series expandable SCSI hard disk subsystem for Macintosh Plus, SE and Mac II are built-in with high performance SCSI hard disks mounted in an expandable enclosure. This flexible enclosure allows for future

growth. It features 150 megabyte to 1.2 gigabyte capacity, 16.5 ms average access time, embedded SCSI hard disks, optional streaming tape backup and AppleShare capabilities.

SmartNet 4000
Switching Pad

Datacraft

Phone: (03) 727 9111
Price: See below

The SmartNet 4000 Switching Pad is an entry level asynchronous pad/switching pad based on a high performance 16-bit 80186 processor with 512 kilobytes DRAM, upgradeable to 1 megabyte.

It provides up to 10 X.25 links and up to two high speed (V.35) X.25 links with 4 to 16 asynchronous channels with speeds up to 9600 bps. The SmartNet 4000 is fully software configurable with an internal 3 1/2 inch disk drive. Software architecture and command structure is the same as the 2000 and 3000 series. Pricing starts at \$4500.

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\$32.00 for a special cable
adapter). ■ A standard

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Tektronix 4693D

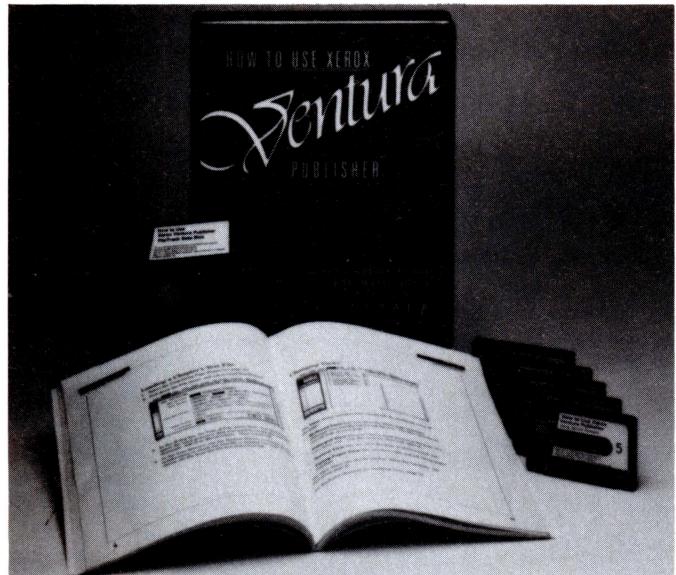
Tektronix

Phone: (02) 888 7066

Price: \$14,500

The Tektronix 4693D is a 300 dots per inch, true colour printer that produces life-like output. It is fully compatible with Sun and Apollo workstations, the IBM PC and the full line of Tek terminals and workstations.

Its high speed Centronics interface can download complex images in as little as five seconds for maximum user productivity. The Motorola 69020 processor drives ultra fast intelligent lamp processing. The 439D offers 12 megabytes of memory and can store three full images of 1024 x 1280 pixel with 24 bits of colour information per pixel.



Services

How to use Ventura Publisher

Barrington Corporation

Phone: (08) 232 1333

Price: See below

How to use Ventura Publisher is an audio based training course for desktop publishing. In five self study cassette lessons of an hour or two each, the training

course introduces the new user to every major command and capability of the program.

By listening to step-by-step instructions on tape, the learner works hands on with the Ventura program itself. Teaching files are provided on a course data disk and a fully indexed Quick reference guide summarizes all key concepts. The course price has not yet been confirmed, but is expected to be around \$189 to \$200 untaxed.

Miscellaneous

Catalog

Sylex

Phone: (02) 647 2888

Price: Not applicable

At last! The definitive catalog of Sylex products has been released! Sylex has issued its 1988 catalog, available from its Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Canberra offices. The catalog features its range of ergonomic furniture, such as chairs and tables, as well as a range of peripherals such as copy holders, keyboard seals, printer holders and footrests.



tures of the Amiga 500. It is aimed at prospective buyers of the 500. The movie may be bought for \$20; this is refunded when delivered back to the dealer. If the viewer purchases the video and the Amiga 500, bonus software has been offered to the value of \$200.

FX-910

Triumph Adler

Phone: (02) 748 3388

Price: \$2650 taxed

The FX-910 is a compact fully featured facsimile unit. It is able to sit on the corner of a desk or hang on a wall and operates by simply plugging it into an ordinary phone line. The FX-10 weighs only 10 pounds. Single button transmission is possible by storing frequently dialled numbers in the autodialer; up to 50 numbers can be stored. The fax unit features a delayed dialling facility. A four digit password is used to prevent unauthorised polling of sensitive documents.

Amiga the Movie

Commodore

Phone: See below

Price: (02) 427 4888

There have been many block-busters that have hit both the large and small screens. Commodore has decided to get into the film industry with the release of Amiga the Movie, a video which present viewers with all the fea-

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HURRY! Offer closes July 1988, for Your Computer.

CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

1. The competition is open only to Australian Residents authorising a new/renewal subscription before last mail July 31, 1988. Entries received after closing date will not be included. Employees of the Federal Publishing Company, Sony Australia and their families are not eligible to enter. To be valid for drawing, subscription must be signed against nominated valid credit card, or, if paid by cheque, cleared for payment.
2. South Australian residents need not complete the coupon but may enter only once by submitting their name, address, and a hand-drawn facsimile of the coupon.
3. Prizes are not transferable or exchangeable and may not be converted to cash.
4. The judges decision is final and no correspondence will be entered in to.
5. Description of the competition and instructions on how to enter form a part of the competition conditions.
6. The competition commences on April 1, 1988 and closes with last mail on July 31, 1988. The draw will take place in Sydney on October 12, 1988 and the winner will be notified by telephone and letter. The winner will also be announced in the Australian on October 17, 1988 and a later issue of the magazine.
7. The first prize is: a Sony Trinitron Remote Control colour TV (\$1,200). 2nd prize: 5 inch portable Black & White TV set (\$159 each), plus 10 consolation prizes of AM/FM all weather radios (approx \$10 each).
8. The promoter is The Federal Publishing Company, 180 Bourke Road, Alexandria NSW 2015. Permit No. TC88/675 issued under the Lotteries and Art Unions Act, 1901; Raffles and Bingo Permits Board Permit No. 88/357 issue on 8/3/88; ACT Permit No. TP88/202 issue under the Lotteries Ordinance, 1964.

DICK SMITH

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The Filer

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The Graph Maker

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Allows your computer, through a suitable modem, to talk with other computers via the telephone line! You can have the program dial up a telephone number and send or receive a file, 'chat' via the keyboard and hang up at the end of a session. Cat X-9707

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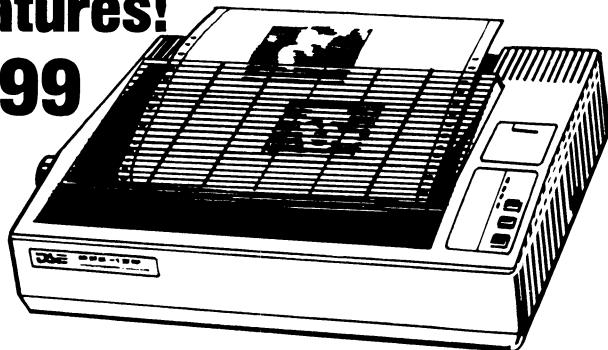
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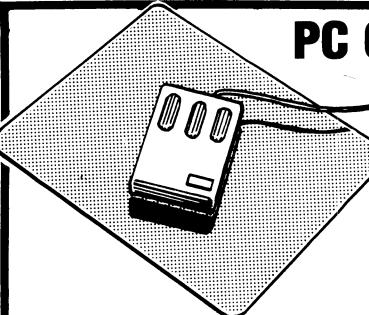
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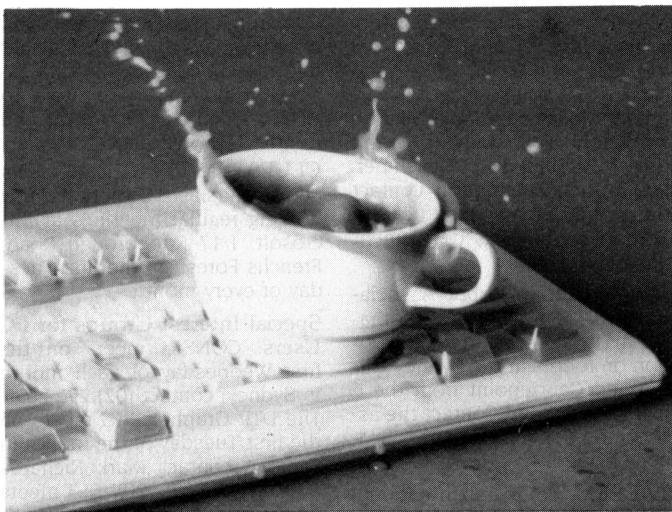
Buy both PC Optical Mouse (X-3800) and PC Paint Plus (X- 9500) together and you'll save \$49!

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Sylex

Phone: (02) 647 2888

Price: \$49 taxed

To overcome the inevitable coffee spills, cigarette ash and dust, Sylex has introduced Keyboard Seals. A Seal is only a few microns thick and covers the keyboard.

It is strong enough to protect the keyboard from liquid and dust that could ruin sensitive circuitry yet, it is flexible so that the keyboard still retains a tactile response. The Keyboard Seal will not brittle with age. Keys remain clearly visible as the Seals are form fitted to most popular makes of keyboards.

Reinking ribbons

The Ribbon Reinking Co.

Phone: (03) 729 4059

Price: See below

Printer ribbons may be one of

the necessities of modern technology, but the cost of replacing old with new doesn't have to be. The Ribbon Reinking Co. reinks used ribbons as well as being able to fix and reink faulty ones. Normal reinking is half the cost of a new ribbon, while repair work is a quarter of the cost of a new ribbon. So if you are sick and tired of spending all that moolah on new ribbons, why not reink?

Manual

GFS Electronics

Phone: (03) 873 3777

Price: See below

GFS Electronics, radio modem manufacturer, has announced the publication of a 10 page manual designed to answer queries about data transmission. It was written about the X.25 type packet radio protocol used in GFS' CPU-50 smart packet radio modem.

The manual, called *Data Transmission Using Packet Radio and the CPU-50 Smart Radio Modem*, assumes some basic knowledge of computers and radio. It is priced at \$5, including postage. Postal address is PO Box 97, Mitcham 3132 Vic.

A series of seminars will be conducted by Management Technology Education. Seminars include Successful User Documentation (to be held in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth), OS/2, PC/MS-DOS and Supporting PCs (Sydney and Melbourne). For further information contact: (02) 262 5555, (03) 670 7117 or (008) 22 4514.

Ausgraph '88 exhibition and conference will be held in Melbourne from July 4 to 8 at the Hyatt on Collins. Enquiries (03) 387 9955.

Building Services - A Perspective for the Future is the title of a conference to be held at Surfers Paradise by the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers from July 7 to 9. For further information contact the Conference Secretary, Robert Turner, 3 Paxton Crs, West Pennant Hills 2120 NSW.

Accountancy in the Age of Technology is the theme for a conference organised by the Institute of Chartered Accountants. It will be held at Broadbeach, Queensland from July 10 to 13. For further information contact Vic Prosser on (02) 290 1344.

The Fourth National Space Engineering Symposium will be held in Adelaide July 12 to 14. Papers dealing with any space engineering are invited. Contact (062) 73 3633.

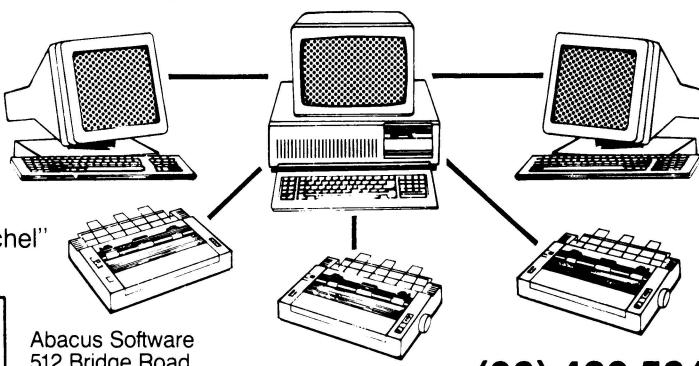
The 5th International Federation of Purchasing and Materials Management (IFPMM) Asia Pacific Regional Conference will be held from 13 to 15 July at the Sheraton Hotel, Brisbane. Contact the Conference Secretariat on (07) 371 7900.

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Papers are being called for SUGA '88, the SAS Users' Group of Australia annual conference. Deadline for abstracts is 15 July. The conference will be held 12 to 14 October at Darling Harbour. Contact the co-ordinator on (02) 908 2244.

Forum '88, organized by the Honeywell Bull Users' Association, will be held at the Sydney Hilton Hotel from July 21 to 23. Contact (02) 218 9578.

Comdex Australia '88 will be held at the Darling Harbour Conference and Exhibition Centre in Sydney from July 26 to 28. Contact (02) 959 5555.

Computer based training, a seminar organised by the NSW branch of ACS is to be held on the 28 and 29 July. A second seminar, Application for Expert systems, will be held on 18 and 19 July. Both will be held at the Masonic Centre, Sydney. Contact Gay Gosling (02) 262 2166.

Ergonomics is the title of a Worksafe Australia external education program to be held in Sydney on 8 and 9 August. The

program is conducted by the National Occupational Health and Safety Committee. For further information phone (02) 265 7555.

Knowledge based systems in civil engineering will be discussed at a symposium to be held at Monash University from August 18 to 19. Contact (03) 565 4718 or (03) 565 4949.

AutoCad Expo '88 will be held at Centrepoint in Sydney from August 23 to 25. It will incorporate the Third National AutoCad Users' Conference. Papers have also been called for by the organisers, Autodesk Australia. Contact (03) 429 9888.

Geomechanics '88 is the fifth Australian/New Zealand conference and exhibition on Geomechanics. It will be held in Sydney from August 22 to 24 at the Hilton Hotel. Contact the Institution of Engineers, Australia on (062) 73 3633.

ACC '88, the annual conference for the ACS will be held at Darling Harbour, 21 to 23 September. Contact Karen Hucks (02) 211 5855.

Microbits 88 is an introductory course on interfacing principles for IBM and compatible machines. The course is either part time (6 weeks duration, 1 night a week from 14 September) or full time (5 days) from 5 December. For further information contact the Queensland Institute of Technology, Physics department on (07) 223 2196.

The Australian Robot Association will be holding an international symposium and exposition on robots at the Sydney Hilton and Centrepoint from the 6 to 10 September. Contact the association at GPO Box 1527, Sydney NSW 2001.

TADSEM '88, the sixth national seminar hosted by Technical Aid to the Disabled, will be held at the Queen Elizabeth II Rehabilitation Centre, Camperdown on the 7 and 8 October. The topic for this year's seminar is Computers Serving People with Disabilities. Contact (02) 808 2022.

Beyond 2000 Science and Technology Spectrum is a multimedia multi dimensional 'experience' held in conjunction with the *Beyond 2000* TV technology show. Five interconnecting pavilions will present working displays of life in the future including lifestyle, medical (featuring a replica of a human heart), industrial, science and electronics. Contact Spectrum Exhibitions on (02) 281 2555.

Infotex '88 is a computer and communications show especially for government. It will be held from November 8 to 10 at the National Exhibition Centre, Canberra. Contact (02) 959 5555.

SST-88, the second Australian International Conference on Speech Science and Technology, will be held at Macquarie University, Sydney, on November 29 and December 1. Contact the Secretariat at Macquarie University on (02) 805 8784.

Microbee Users Group of WA. New members please note that the group meets at the Leederville Technical College. For further information contact the secretary, Ross Gould on (09) 417 1374 after hours; or write to PO Box N1090, Perth 2000.

The Australian Paradox Users Group (APUG) has been formed. Regular monthly meetings will be held on the last Tuesday of each month at Bird

Cameron, 316 Queen St, Melbourne 3000 Victoria. For further information contact Gordon Castle on (03) 563 1037. Or write to APUG PO Box 26, Chadstone Centre 3148 Victoria.

CLUES, the C Language Users and Enthusiasts Society, is now holding regular meetings at Microsoft, 1/17 Rodborough Road, Frenchs Forest on the first Tuesday of every month.

Special Interest Groups for PC Users: CONSIG meets on the first Wednesday of each month in Sydney; contact (02) 290 2655. The DTP Graphics SIG meets on the first Tuesday of the month in Sydney; contact Mark Richards on (02) 929 5855. PCWEST meets on the first Monday of the month in Sydney; phone Bill McEwen (02) 627 2488.

The President Users Group meets on the last Tuesday of each month at the Hornsby Inn. Contact Raymond Toms on (02) 212 5277.

Watercomp '89, the first Australasian conference on Technical Computing in the Water Industry organisers are asking for papers. The conference will be held from May 30 to June 1, 1989 at the Regent Hotel, Melbourne. Contact the Institute of Engineers, Australia on (062) 70 6549.

Overseas Exhibitions

ECCE '88, the European Conference on Computers in Education, will be held from 25 to 29 July at Lausanne, Switzerland. Contact Switzerland (021) 27 7321 or telex 24833.

Comtec '88 will be held at the World Trade Centre in Singapore from 25 to 28 August. Contact Paul White on (03) 663 3911.

A three day conference on Graphic Design Systems will be conducted by McDonnell Douglas Information Systems from August 31 to September 2. Contact Graham Reeve, Sydney (02) 887 9425.

Internepon/Semiconductor Asia/Pacific, will be held from 14 to 17 September at the World Trade Centre in Singapore. Contact Ann Theseria or Karen Chang, Cahners, Singapore 271 1013. □

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THE PROPHET

SYSOPS BEWARE! In an electronic magazine that is available from my bulletin board there is an article written about a user in the United States who was taking legal action against a SysOp (System Operator) for invasion of privacy. Apparently the user had been having correspondence with another user on this system in private mail (the actual discussion was not mentioned in the article). The SysOp for some reason took the private messages and re-posted them onto a public board for everyone to see. The user has claimed unspecified damages as a result of this, which basically means go for whatever she can get, on the basis that the publishing of the messages has damaged her personal reputation and also her continued employment.

Now I have two seemingly conflicting concerns over the issue (as did the original article); if the messages were posted by the SysOp for some self satisfying urge (like being a twit) then he/she should really be taken out and shot. On the other hand, if the SysOp is innocent (hmmmm?) then the risk is that this could cause a flood of copy cat type suits simply to try and make money.

This is especially relevant to me for a number of reasons, mainly, because a little while ago some messages that were entered as private on Prophet by one of my users were processed by some new software I am writing as public instead (ouch!). Now I know there is no comparison in intent, but courts don't generally worry about whether you meant to do something or not – they are only concerned about whether you did it at all.

At the rate bulletin boards are going we will need lawyers full time – checking messages, file uploads and complaints. I know this is probably over reacting but sometimes you wonder...

I never cease to be amazed at the attitude of certain individuals, not just people using bulletin boards. Most boards in Australia provide an excellent service better than most, if not all, of the so called commercial systems. Generally they are free of charge, or the charge is so minute that it is not worth thinking about.

So it's for the benefit of others that a bulletin board system is run... but before entering the system for the first time you are asked by the system (at the instruction of the operator) to complete identification details which is commonly called registration. Now there are still a few boards that do not require any details, but these are becoming very rare creatures indeed.

Why all the fuss? Well long, long ago, in the pre-history of boards, like 18 months ago, even Prophet didn't need you to register. You want to use the system? Sure go right ahead! I had survived like that for a few years; the 'Howdy, welcome in' was easy for everyone.

But along came the disrupters... posting foul language and performing other acts of vandalism, so new users now need to register. This means you tell me your name, address and telephone number and before I give you access I can check the information (if necessary) and ensure you are who you say you are. Not much trouble really, takes only a few minutes to complete and a couple of days to process.

Now we get people (very few thankfully) who think that it is an infringement on their rights to be 'forced' to supply this information. WALR (What A Load of Rubbish)! Bet if you knocked on their front door and asked for dinner they would want to know who the hell you were! I am always amused (or is that, annoyed?) when someone demands that I give them access without knowing who they are.

MicroGeneral has graciously replaced my ailing hard disk with a

new Brand (sic) drive. Boy, it's so quiet, it must be a Dishlex!

The Registry has a new Victorian co-ordinator in Rowan Stevens, System Operator of the Brainstorm Australia BBS. I hear John Blackett-Smith succumbed to too much Malibu at the last SysOps meeting. Seriously – John, thanks for the help and hope the withdrawal symptoms are not too bad (from the Registry – what else?).

Welcome Rowan, I'm sure that you'll find the role of co-ordinator interesting and challenging (doublespeak for 'Do you realise what you are in for?'). There are over a hundred changes this month – we all are suffering from keying and ticking all of them but at least it's done and out for all. □

Primary electronic collection points

The last full listing was given in the April 1988 issue; refer to the Services page on how to obtain Back issues.

ACT – PC Exchange RIBM
(062) 58 1406

NSW – Prophet TBBS
(02) 628 5222

Vic. – Brainstorm Australia
(03) 758 7086

Qld. – AMPAK RCP/M
(07) 263 7070

SA – The Electronic Oracle
(08) 260 6222

WA – Nemo BBS RAPL
(09) 370 1855

PAMS News 8805

NEW SOUTH WALES

*** Amended ***

ABCOM-dataLINK

Sysop: Ben Sharif

Phone: (047) 36-4165

FIDOnet: 713/304

Baud: V21 V22 V22bis V23

Access: Mem Reg VA

Computer: IBM AT Clone

DOS: PC DOS

BBSsoftware: QuickBBS

*** Amended ***

Airlock Hermitage

Sysop: Greg Glynn

Phone: (02) 600-1384

FIDOnet: 713/609

Baud: V21 V22 V22bis V23

Access: Reg VA

Hours: Weekdays: 1730 – 0800

Weekends: 24 hours

Computer: IBM PS/2 60

DOS: PC DOS

BBSsoftware: Opus

*** Amended ***

Amiga Zone BBS

Sysop: Richard Duffy

Phone: (02) 771-6351

Baud: V21 V22 V23 B103 B212

Access: Mem LVA

Hours: Daily: 2100 – 0700

Computer: Amiga 1000

DOS: Amiga

BBSsoftware: BBS-PC!

*** NEW System ***

Apollowline BBS

Sysop: Richard Heppell

Phone: (02) 869-8349

Baud: V21 V22 V23

Access: Reg VA

Computer: Macintosh

DOS: HFS

BBSsoftware: Red Ryder Host

*** NEW System ***

Apple Users Group – Apple // BBS

Sysop: Cameron Brawn

Phone: (02) 498-7084

Baud: V21 V22 V22bis V23

Access: Mem LVA

Computer: Apple //E

DOS: PRODOS

BBSsoftware: Proboard //

*** Amended ***

Apple Users Group – MAC BBS

Sysop: Bruce Stanley

Phone: (02) 498-7084

Baud: V21 V22 V22bis V23

Access: Mem LVA

Computer: Macintosh

DOS: HFS

BBSsoftware: Red Ryder Host

*** NEW System ***

BAD NEWS travels fast

Sysop: James Stevenson

Phone: (02) 540-1879

Baud: V21 V22 V23

Access: Reg VA

Computer: IBM XT

DOS: MS DOS

BBSsoftware: Opus

*** Offline ***

Blackboard BBS

*** NEW System ***

BLAZE-dataLINK

Sysop: Lee Enfield

Phone: (047) 36-4825

THE PROPHET

FIDOnet: 713/303	Sysop: Ross Wheeler	BBSsoftware: Opus	Access: Mem Reg VA
Baud: V21 V22 V22bis V23	Phone: (060) 25-1813	*** Online ***	Computer: Microbee
Access: Mem Reg VA	FIDOnet: 712/201	Omen RTRS	DOS: CP/M80
Computer: IBM AT Clone	Baud: V21 V22 V22bis V23 B103	Sysop: Ted Romer	BBSsoftware: PBBS
DOS: PC DOS	B212	Phone: (02) 498-2495	*** Name Changed ***
BBSsoftware: QuickBBS	Access: Reg LVA	Baud: V21 V23	Sydney PC Users RIBM
*** NEW System ***	Computer: AT Clone	Access: Public	Info: Now Called
Books BBS	DOS: MS DOS	Hours: Weekdays: 1630 – 0900	PC Users Group – Westpac Board
Sysop: Jon Ruwolt & Chris Ruwoldt	BBSsoftware: Opus	Weekends: 24 Hours	*** NEW System ***
Phone: (02) 281-4791	Info: 147.575 Mhz VK2DGY (Radio)	*** NEW System ***	The Exchange FRP BBS
Baud: V21 V22 V22bis V23	1200 bps Amateur Packet Radio	Pandemonium QBBS	Sysop: Cameron Martin & Scott Caundle
Computer: IBM XT Clone	*** Offline ***	Sysop: Mark Farnan	Phone: (02) 644-9211
DOS: MS DOS	Info-Centre BBS	Phone: (02) 411-7642	Baud: V21
BBSsoftware: Opus	*** Amended ***	Baud: V22	Hours: Daily: 1900 – 0730
*** Amended ***	Integra TEX	Access: Reg VA	Computer: C-64
Cesspit RAPL	Sysop: Kevin Leong	Computer: IBM XT Clone	BBSsoftware: FRP
Sysop: Andrew Winter	Phone: (02) 746-1109	BBSsoftware: QuickBBS	*** Offline ***
Phone: (02) 543-7204	FIDOnet: 712/703	*** NEW System ***	The Guild FRP BBS
Baud: V22 B103 B212	Baud: V22	PC Users Group – IBM Board	*** NEW System ***
Computer: Apple IIE	Access: Public	Sysop: John Clarke	The Ivory Tower
DOS: PRO DOS	Computer: IBM AT Clone	Phone: (02) 724-6813	Sysop: Colin Leslie
BBSsoftware: GBBS PRO	DOS: PC DOS	Baud: V21 V22 V23	Phone: (02) 668-8021
*** Amended ***	BBSsoftware: Opus	Access: Reg LVA	Baud: V22 V22bis
Coastal Opus BBS	*** Amended ***	Computer: IBM AT	Access: Public
Sysop: Kevin Mann	Landover BBS	DOS: PC DOS	Computer: IBM XT Clone
Phone: (043) 23-2275	Sysop: Lance Lyon	BBSsoftware: Opus	DOS: MS DOS
FIDOnet: 711/430	Phone: (02) 319-1793	*** NEW System ***	BBSsoftware: GTPower
Baud: V22 V22bis V23	Baud: V21 V22 V22bis V23 B103	PC Users Group – Microcomp Board	*** NEW System ***
Access: Reg VA	B212	Sysop: Bruce Edney	The Runway
Computer: IBM AT Clone	Access: Mem LVA	Phone: (02) 540-1842	Sysop: Colin Lean
DOS: MS DOS	Computer: Commodore PC5	FIDOnet: 712/505	Phone: (02) 569-5130
BBSsoftware: Opus	DOS: PC DOS	Baud: V21 V22	FIDOnet: 712/506
*** Amended ***	BBSsoftware: BBS-PC!	Access: Mem Reg VA	Baud: V21 V22 V22bis V23
CoCo Arena QBBS	*** Offline ***	Computer: IBM PC	Access: Reg VA
Sysop: John Kelly	Matrix (Newcastle) BBS	DOS: PC DOS	Computer: IBM XT
Phone: (02) 646-5573	*** Amended ***	BBSsoftware: Opus	DOS: PC DOS
Baud: V21 V22	Micro Design Lab	*** Amended ***	BBSsoftware: Opus
BBSsoftware: QuickBBS	Sysop: Kevin Lowton & Lindsay Gorrie	PC Users Group – Westpac Board	*** Amended ***
*** Amended ***	Phone: (02) 663-0151	Sysop: Geoff May	Triops BBS
Delta Net	Baud: V21	Phone: (02) 221-5520	Sysop: Pdisk
Sysop: Geoff Arthur	Access: Reg VA	Baud: V21 V22 V23	Phone: (063) 62-9715
Phone: (02) 457-8281	*** Amended ***	Access: Mem VA	Baud: V21
Baud: V21 V22 V23	Micro Mart C Users	Computer: IBM PC	Access: Public
Access: Public	Sysop: Rick Polito	DOS: PC DOS	Hours: Daily 2100 – 1800
BBSsoftware: QuickBBS	Phone: (02) 560-3607	BBSsoftware: Fido	Computer: C-128
*** Amended ***	FIDOnet: 712/501	*** Offline ***	BBSsoftware: KBBS
Dick Smiths RIBM	Baud: V21 V22 V22bis V23	Raucous BBS	*** Offline ***
Sysop: Paul Beaver	Access: Reg LVA	*** Online ***	Ventura Publisher BBS
Phone: (02) 887-2276	Computer: DECA AT	Sysop: Greg Hope	*** Amended ***
Baud: V21 V22	DOS: MS DOS	Phone: (02) 646-4865	Zeta
Access: Public	BBSsoftware: QuickBBS	Baud: V21 V22 V23	Sysop: Nick Andrew
Computer: Multitech PC-500	Info: C & dBase User System	Access: Public	Phone: (02) 627-4177
DOS: MS DOS	*** Offline ***	*** Offline ***	FIDOnet: 713/602
BBSsoftware: Opus	Mirage Arcane	Scorpio BBS	Baud: V21 V22 V22bis V23 B103
*** NEW System ***	*** Offline ***	*** Amended ***	B212
Eagle One BBS	New Frontiers CBCS	Shore BBS	Access: Mem VA
Sysop: Terry Harvey	*** Amended ***	Sysop: David Gill & Jason Sharp	Computer: TRS-80
Phone: (02) 745-3190	Newcastle Amiga BBS	Phone: (02) 959-3936	DOS: NEWDOS 80
Baud: V21 V22 V23	Sysop: Stan White	Baud: V21	Info: C, Unix & Minix Users
Access: Reg LVA	Phone: (049) 58-7099	Access: Reg VA	QUEENSLAND
Computer: Tandy 1000	Baud: V21 V22 V22bis V23	Hours: Weekdays: 1800 – 0730	*** Offline ***
DOS: MS DOS	Access: Public	Weekends: 24 Hours	Cairns & District IBBS
BBSsoftware: BBS-PC!	Computer: Amiga 1000	Computer: Macintosh	*** NEW System ***
*** Online ***	BBSsoftware: BBS-PC!	DOS: HFS	FAR-NOR-64 BBS
Galaxy RAPL	*** Amended ***	BBSsoftware: Red Ryder Host	Sysop: Ian Pearse
Sysop: Chris Nelligan	Nightmare BBS	*** NEW System ***	Phone: (070) 54-6892
Phone: (02) 875-3943	Sysop: Todd Wright	SMUG Bee RCP/M	Baud: V21 V22 V23 B103 B212
Baud: V21	Phone: (02) 545-1132	Sysop: Stephen Thompson	Access: Mem Reg LVA
Access: Mem LVA	FIDOnet: 712/503	Phone: (02) 476-6396	Computer: C-64
BBSsoftware: Proboard //	Baud: V21 V22 V22bis V23	Baud: V21 V22 V22bis V23	DOS: BASIC IEEE
*** Amended ***	Computer: FTC 1600XT		
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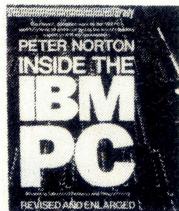
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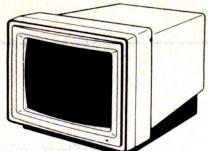
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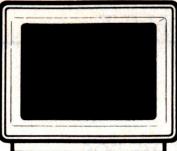
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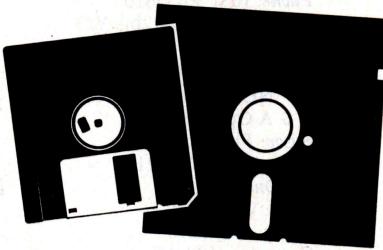
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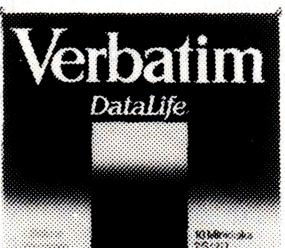
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 *** Amended ***
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Sysop: Ray Chalmers
Phone: (070) 51-7220
FIDOnet: 640/501
Baud: V22 V22bis B103 PEP
Access: Reg VA
Computer: Cleveland 286
BBS*Software*: Opus

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

*** Amended ***
Adam Link BBS
Sysop: Greg Hicks
Phone: (08) 270-2713
Baud: V21 V22 V22bis V23
Access: Reg LVA
Computer: IBM AT
DOS: MS DOS
BBS*Software*: PC Board
 *** Offline ***
Adelaide MicroBee BBS
 *** Amended ***
Multiple System BBS
Sysop: Danny Vozzo
Phone: (08) 255-5116
Baud: V21 V22 V22bis V23
Access: Reg LVA
Computer: Apple //+
DOS: Apple DOS
BBS*Software*: GBBS
 *** Offline ***
The Postie BBS

VICTORIA

*** Amended ***
ACES High
Sysop: Daryl Harvey
Phone: (03) 878-2918
Baud: V21 V22 V23
Access: Public
DOS: PRODOS
BBS*Software*: GBBSPro
 *** Amended ***
Alpha Centauri BBS
Sysop: David & Kim Nugent
Phone: (03) 874-3559
FIDOnet: 632/348
Baud: V22 V22bis
Access: Reg
Computer: Micro 10-AT
DOS: PC DOS
BBS*Software*: Opus
 *** Offline ***
Atlantis RBBS-PC
 *** Amended ***
Brainstorm Australia
Sysop: Rowan Stevens
Phone: (03) 758-7086
FIDOnet: 631/322
Baud: V21 V22 V22bis V23 B103 B212
Computer: IBM XT
DOS: MS DOS
BBS*Software*: Opus
 *** Amended ***
Cave 76
Sysop: Avatar
Phone: (03) 882-9179
Baud: V21 V22 V22bis V23

Hours: 1800 – 1000 Daily
Computer: IBM XT Clone
 *** Amended ***
Crystal Palace
Sysop: Chris Brunton
Phone: (03) 725-1923
Baud: V21 V22
 *** Amended ***
Crystal Symphony Opus
Sysop: Greg Jones
Phone: (03) 874-4176
FIDOnet: 632/346
Baud: V21 V22 B103 B212
Access: Mem VA
Hours: Daily: 2200 – 0700
Computer: IBM XT Clone
DOS: PC DOS
BBS*Software*: Opus
 *** Amended ***
Electronic Cross-Over BBS
Sysop: Stephen Paddon
Phone: (03) 367-5816
Baud: V21 V22 V22bis V23
Computer: IBM AT
BBS*Software*: QuickBBS
 *** NEW System ***
L & A Opus BBS
Sysop: Phillip Kelly
Phone: (03) 800-3215
FIDOnet: 631/327
Baud: V21 V22 V23
Access: Reg LVA
Computer: IBM AT
DOS: PC DOS
BBS*Software*: Opus
 *** Amended ***
Labyrinth
Sysop: Stephen Jones
Phone: (03) 318-6562
Baud: V21 V23
Access: Reg VA
Hours: Daily: 2100 – 0900
Computer: IBM XT Clone
DOS: MS DOS
BBS*Software*: Fido
 *** NEW System ***
MacLink BBS
Sysop: Roger Harris
Phone: (03) 772-4098
Baud: V21 V22 V23
 *** Amended ***
Maxitel BBS
Sysop: Jos Van Der Sman
Phone: (03) 882-6188
Baud: V21
Access: Public
Computer: C-64
BBS*Software*: FPR BBS
 *** Amended ***
Melbourne Data Exchange
Sysop: Robert Broomhead
Phone: (03) 561-6556
FIDOnet: 633/360
Baud: V22 V22bis V23
Access: Reg VA
BBS*Software*: Opus
 *** Amended ***
Melbourne PC Users Group BBS
Sysop: Charles Sandercock
Phone: (03) 819-5392
FIDOnet: 631/323
Access: Public

DOS: MS DOS
BBS*Software*: Opus
 *** NEW System ***
Mercury
Sysop: John Swanland
Phone: (03) 887-1485
Baud: V21
Hours: Weekdays: 1930 – 0600
Weekends: 24 Hours
 *** NEW System ***
Miki's Opus CBCS
Sysop: Miklos Bolvary & Emil Zudic
Phone: (03) 801-7040
FIDOnet: 631/326
Baud: V22 V22bis B103 B212
Hours: Daily: 2100 – 0900
Computer: ELT AT
DOS: PC DOS
BBS*Software*: Opus
 *** Amended ***
PC Connection IBBS
Sysop: Lloyd Barrett
Phone: (03) 528-3750
Baud: V21 V22 V22bis V23
Computer: IBM XT
DOS: MS DOS
BBS*Software*: IBBS
 *** Name Changed ***
PC User BBS
Info: Now Called
Melbourne PC Users Group BBS
 *** Amended ***
Pegasus
Sysop: Lee Gordon-Brown
Phone: (03) 725-4948
FIDOnet: 630/309
Baud: V21 V22 V23
Access: Public
Hours: Weekdays: 1700 – 0900
Weekends: 24 Hours
Computer: IBM AT
DOS: MS DOS
BBS*Software*: Opus
 *** Amended ***
Sotec BBS
Sysop: Jim Tsorlinis
Phone: (03) 890-8166
Baud: V22 V22bis B103 B212
Access: Reg VA
Computer: Sotec XT Turbo
DOS: PC DOS
BBS*Software*: Opus
 *** NEW System ***
Super Dimensional BBS
Sysop: Mulia Marzuki
Phone: (03) 560-2659
Baud: V22 V22bis
Hours: Daily: 2100 – 0800
BBS*Software*: Opus
 *** NEW System ***
The Amiga Limits
Sysop: Captain Kirk
Phone: (03) 725-2895
Baud: V21 V22 V23
Access: Reg VA
Computer: IBM AT
DOS: PC DOS
BBS*Software*: QuickBBS
 *** Amended ***
The Australian Pub with NO Beer
Sysop: Grahame Mitchell
Phone: (03) 736-1814
FIDOnet: 632/350
Baud: V21 V22 V23
Access: Mem VA
Hours: Daily: 1000 – 0800
Computer: Amstrad 1512
BBS*Software*: Opus
 *** Amended ***
The Krome Philes CBCS
Sysop: The Renegade
Phone: (03) 743-0324
Baud: V21 V22 V22bis V23
Computer: Mitac XT
BBS*Software*: Opus
 *** Amended ***
The NATIONAL CBCS
Sysop: John Blackett-Smith
Phone: (03) 25-6904
FIDOnet: 630/301
Access: Public
Computer: IBM AT
DOS: MS DOS
BBS*Software*: Opus
 *** NEW System ***
The Outer Limits
Sysop: Captain Kirk
Phone: (03) 725-6650
Baud: V21 V22 V23
Access: Reg VA
Computer: IBM AT
DOS: PC DOS
BBS*Software*: Opus
 *** Amended ***
The Real Connection
Sysop: The Real Article & Deep Image
Phone: (03) 288-0331
Baud: V21 V22 V23
Access: Public
Computer: IBM XT Clone
DOS: DoubleDOS
BBS*Software*: Opus
 *** Amended ***
Thongheads Welfare BBS
Sysop: Thongers
Phone: (03) 419-9256
Baud: V21 V22 V22bis
Access: Reg
Hours: Weekdays: 1800 – 0900
Weekends: 24 Hours
 *** Name Changed ***
Yarra Valley BBS
Info: Now Called
The Australian Pub with NO Beer
 *** NEW System ***
Yarra Valley BBS
Sysop: Frank Conner
Phone: (059) 64-3126
Baud: V21 V22 V23 B103 B212
Access: Mem VA
Computer: C-64
BBS*Software*: Punter

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

*** NEW System ***
The Hotel
Sysop: Rod Evans
Phone: (09) 325-4752
Baud: V22 V22bis
Computer: IBM AT Clone
DOS: MS DOS
BBS*Software*: Opus

First Australian Forth Symposium

The First Australian Forth Symposium was held in late May at the University of Technology, Sydney, and its results surprised even the organisers, as Roy Hill reports . . .

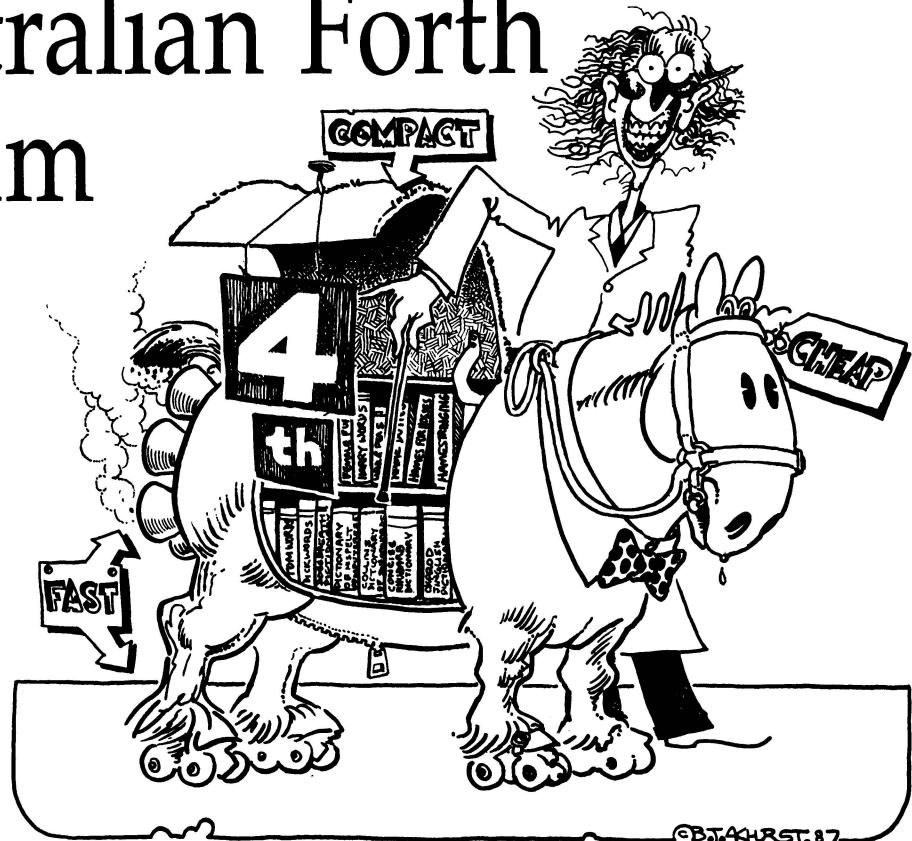
INITIAL indications led us to expect about 100 participants, which we considered fairly healthy for a conference of this nature. Over 200 people attended, with a large contingent of overseas visitors, including several from Alaska.

Come Forth!

FORTH was the first of the fourth generation languages. (Born, we are told from the arrogance of Charles Moore.) It's compact, fast and cheap – sound interesting?

If you'd like to know more, see Roy Hill's introductory articles, 'Come Forth' – Parts 1 and 2, in our May and June, 1987, issues. Back copies are available – refer to the Services pages.

Also, in the November, 1987, issue, in 'Your Own Personal Supercomputer', Roy told of the Novix chip, a dedicated Forth chip 'invented' by Charles Moore, and used by the Australian company, Maestro Electronics, to develop a supercomputer.



The overseas visitors included Charles Moore (who developed the language), Elizabeth Rather (the second Forth programmer), Rob Reiling (President of FIG USA) and Henry Laxen and Michael Perry (the writers of F83).

The symposium dinner was attended by over 100 of the participants and the after dinner key-note addresses by Charles Moore and Elizabeth Rather were both humorous and informative. Nearly all of the overseas visitors indicated that they will return to the next symposium, which we hope will be hosted in Melbourne in 1989.

A list of participants is being circulated to all of those attending. Any persons who were unable to attend the conference and wish to be included on the list should contact –

Mr Jose Alfonso,
Continuing Education,
University of Technology,
PO Box 123,
Broadway 2007 NSW

Copies of the conference papers (\$20) are also available from the above address. In addition, the conference was able to establish a Users' Group for owners of the Maestro Novix Board. The group may be contacted through –

Mr Keith Lane,
PO Box 74,
Boronia 3155 Vic.

The organisers of the conference would like to thank Federal Publishing, and, in particular, Jake Kennedy, the editor of *Your Computer* magazine, for the active support provided. A large amount of editorial space was provided for articles and symposium information and it was support such as this that ensured the outstanding success of the conference.

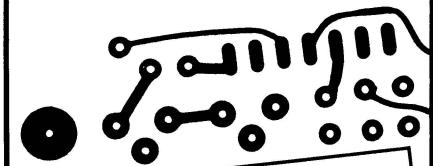
Rob Reiling assured participants that 'No other first time Forth symposium anywhere in the world' has attracted such a large number of participants and such a wide variety of papers and application workshops. □



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TIM HARTNELL

YOUR AMSTRAD



In the column this month we have a graphics program for the 464/6128 and a 'pyramid-creator' for the Amstrad PC. In addition, we have news from a couple of Amstrad user groups, plus details of a digitising service being offered to users of PCW desktop publishing programs.

CP/M software for the CPC Models

Bob Siddon, in Bendigo, points out that an Amstrad postal users group for CPC models has been producing a monthly journal in Australia since July 1985. The journal – supplied on disk – is aimed at users interested in learning about their machines, and computers in general.

The group has built up a collection of 16 disks of CP/M utilities, dBase II shells and MBasic programs. Copies of these library disks are free, with only a postage charge for dumps to users' disks, 3½ inch or 5¼ inch. For a list, with notes, of the programs in the library, all you need to do is send a disk, plus \$2 for return postage, to Bob at the Amstrad All Australia Postal Group, PO Box 1084, Bendigo 3550 Vic.

Note that PCW users should send a pre-formatted disk, as the group can copy to PCW format, but cannot actually format a PCW disk. Write to Bob, at the above address, for details on the CPC Journal.

Sunshine Amstrads

From Queensland, Mark Abbot tells me about the Gold Coast Amstrad User Group of which he is the president. His address is 17 Ewan Street, Southport 4215 Qld;

(075) 31 2114. The club meets at 2 pm on the second Saturday in each month at Benowa State High School, Mediterranean Street, Benowa.

Desktop Digitisation

In New South Wales, David Higgins of PO Box 985, Cooma 2630 NSW, has explained that he's offering an image digitising service for PCW desktop publishers. He handles Fleet Street Editor Plus, Desktop Publisher, Newsdesk International and Masterpaint.

A free disk of Amstrad PC-specific software will be given to anyone supplying hints which are used in this column.

Using CONFIG.SYS

Mark Thomas, from Port Lincoln in South Australia, recently decided to move from an IBM PC XT to an Amstrad PC1512. He says he is 'very happy' about making the change.

'I note that there seems to be general agreement that GEM is a *pretty* way to be introduced to the principles of files, directories and graphics programs, but that

when it comes down to simply loading programs, copying files and so on, DOS (or DOSPlus) is the way to go,' says Mark.

'The problem is that you need to lead some DOS commands, and it takes a while to learn all the tricks to set the machine up *just right*.'

Mark has had the benefit of many hours experimentation with his Amstrad PC, and says that the most useful lines you may have in the text file CONFIG.SYS are –

FILES=n – This command sets up the maximum number of files which can be open at one time. This is important for database programs particularly, which often use more than the default of 8. A more useful number is 20.

BUFFERS=n – This command reserves an area of memory for data being read from, or written to, disk. The larger the number, up to about 30, the faster most 'disk-intensive' programs will run. Each buffer uses half a kilobyte, so you had better be careful if you're short of memory. A pretty good balance of speed versus memory used seems to be 15.

DEVICE= – This command is used to specify any number of 'device drivers' (separate commands for each) which handle such mundane but useful tasks as setting up RAM drives and handling extended screen and keyboard functions.

COUNTRY=n – This allows you to tell the computer it lives in Oz, so that it gets the dates the right way around.

Spiral Galaxies on the 464/1628

Jeff Hughes, from Watsonia North in Victoria, has created a very neat graphics program for the 464/1628. When you run the program, you are asked to enter a value for step size, and values for the variables a and b. See Listing 1.

```
5 CLS
10 MODE 2
20 DEG
30 ORIGIN 320,200
40 INPUT "step size,a,b,";s,a,b
50 CLS
55 PLOT 0,0
60 FOR ang=0 TO 36000 STEP s
70 x=ang*(COS(a*ang)):y=ang*(SIN(b*ang))
80 DRAW x/120,y/180
90 NEXT ang
```

Listing 1. The listing for Spiral Galaxies, a graphics program for the 464/1628 – compliments of Jeff Hayes.

When you've got this up and running, try the following values –

STEP	A	B	Picture produced
80	1.0	2.0	Cubism
91	1.0	1.0	Spiral Galaxy
91	2.0	1.0	Wedge Starship
91	1.0	2.0	Unfoldment
91	2.0	2.0	Sea Urchin
91	0.5	1.0	Butterflip
170	1.0	1.0	Star burst

Name Pyramid

A somewhat simpler program is provided for owners of Amstrad PCs this month. It creates a pyramid out of any words (up to 15 letters long, including spaces and any other characters) you enter. Try it with your first and last names, and then with other words, or symbol combinations.

```
REM Amstrad PC Pyramid
REM Tim Hartnell - Your Computer
CLS
PRINT:INPUT"What is your full name";a$
IF LEN(a$)>15 THEN a$=LEFT$(a$,15)
a=LEN(a$)
CLS
PRINT:PRINT
FOR s=1 TO a
PRINT TAB(24-s);
FOR h=1 TO 2*s
PRINT MID$(a$,s,h);
NEXT h
PRINT
NEXT s
```

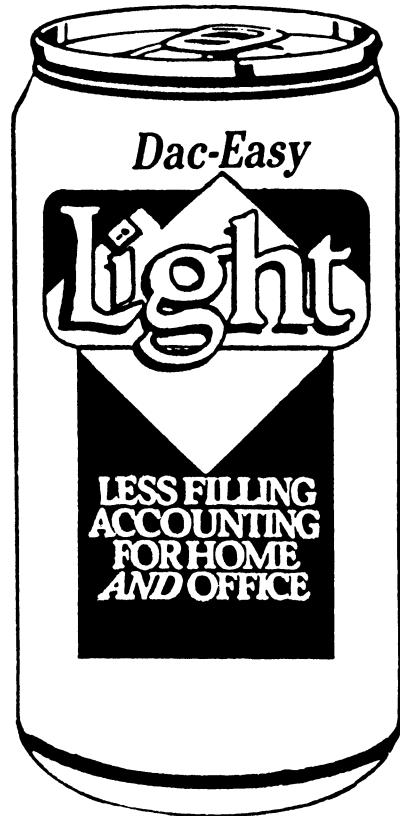
Listing 2. For the Amstrad PC- make a pyramid out of words up to 15 characters long.

The program is easy to modify so that you can print the pyramids out on your printer rather than, or in addition to, the screen; it also gives you a chance to admire one pyramid, before asking you to enter details for a subsequent one, rather than demanding that you run the program from scratch each time you want to create a pyramid.

We'll be including Your Amstrad in future issues of the magazine. I'd be interested in hearing from any companies making hardware or software for any of the Amstrad range for review in this column. As well, I'd be more than happy to share any of your discoveries, hints, tips, comments and programs with other users of the great Amstrad machines, along with details of any Amstrad-specific user groups.

A free disk of Amstrad PC-specific software will be given to anyone supplying hints which are used in this column. Please write to Your Amstrad, Tim Hartnell, Your Computer, Box 227, Waterloo 2015 NSW. □

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IBM UNDERGROUND

Power menu

Some experienced users sneer at using menu systems to bypass DOS. Count me out of that group. Novices benefit greatly from a simplified user interface, as do power users. With many programs on a large hard disk, manually entering commands to change to subdirectories and run programs takes far too many keystrokes. For far too long users have had to remember where everything is – menial housekeeping duties that the computer surely should do for us.

For the last year or so I have used a menu system that uses a complex set of interlocking batch files. To run them, I get the user's selection via SETERROR.COM, a program that was in 'Your IBM', August 1986. I also use XtreePro and Norton Commander to wander around my disk, but to use these as a DOS shell does require a fair knowledge of DOS. Some commercial menuing programs are available that read through the files on your disk, and build a custom menu system. Now there is PowerMenu, a shareware product that can take over almost all the duties of running programs from a menu, and can also take over many routine housekeeping duties.

What is PowerMenu?

PowerMenu is an operating environment for IBM PCs or compatibles, providing easy access to any application. Word processing, spreadsheets or any other PC programs are just a keystroke away. PowerMenu is particularly suited for end users who would rather not worry about subdirectories, command line parameters and command names. A typical use would see PowerMenu set up to run a word processor when the W key is hit. Users exit from word processing, are back in the main PowerMenu, and need never interact with DOS.

PowerMenu uses the familiar SideKick like menu structure. Context-sensitive online help is available at the touch of a key. Passwords can be set for individual applications and submenus. Users can temporarily exit to DOS, run programs and commands, and return to PowerMenu. It also contains a file manager, allowing files to be marked in several subdirectories, and performs DOS functions on these files.

Installation

PowerMenu comes on a disk with a root directory and two sub-directories. I got it

from a bulletin board, and it is now on the YC Bulletin Board as PWRM?DOC.ARC, PWRM313.ARC and PWRM313.DOC. All the files from the original publisher (Brown Bag Software) are in PWRM313.ARC, while PWRM313.DOC details how to install them on a floppy disk to make a master disk, and PWRM?DOC.ARC has the documentation reformatted for 66 and 70 line paper.

The F1 key brings up Help, F2 invokes Utilities, F3 offers Options, F4 jumps to DOS and F5 runs the Disk Manager.

Having obtained, or recreated, the master disk, place it in the A: drive and log onto it. Run MINSTALL.EXE, an installation program which creates a subdirectory on your C: drive called MENU, and copies the files across. It then looks through your hard disk for standard applications and creates a menu system, taking only a few minutes even with a large and slow hard disk. This is a 'first stab' only, as the program has to look at file names and guess which programs they are. It will inevitably miss some and mis-identify others, but customising and fine tuning a menu system is not too difficult for anyone with reasonable PC know-how, though novices might need some assistance.

Menuing system

When starting PowerMenu, an initial copyright message appears, followed by the main screen. At the top is a box with the publisher's name, program name, version, serial number, date and time. Superimposed is the first menu, offering 10 choices. Some of these are actual programs which could be run, while others are the names of sub-menus. Up to four levels of menus can appear on screen at a time, and so it is possible to have around 10,000 choices available.

A program or sub-menu can be selected in one of three ways. A highlight bar can be moved with the cursor keys over a choice, and be actuated with the Enter

key. The choice can be made by pressing the leading letter of the title. Beside each menu entry is a number from 0 to 9, and pressing it can also select an option. Menus can be relocated on screen by pressing the Scroll Lock key and then using the cursor keys to move the menu.

Entries can be modified by moving the cursor bar over them and pressing Ins to invoke an editor. When editing a menu entry, the title to be shown in the menu, the directory in which it is found, the program file name (for example, WS.COM for WordStar), parameters and password are specified. Menu entries are deleted by highlighting them with the cursor bar and pressing Del, while a new entry is created by placing the cursor over a blank entry and pressing Ins to invoke that editor again. In addition, many DOS commands are available from menus.

If this menuing system was all that was offered by PowerMenu it would still be powerful and useful, but there are other features. The F1 key brings up Help, F2 invokes Utilities, F3 offers Options, F4 jumps to DOS and F5 runs the Disk Manager. Disk Manager, Options and Window to DOS can also be selected from the Utilities menu, and are each covered in their own sections below.

Utilities

Many possibilities are available from the Utilities menu. These are Help, Disk Manager, System Info, Map of Progs, Window to DOS, Printer Status, RAM Status, Time Set, New Date, Colors, Options and Exit. Any of these can be selected by either highlighting the desired one with the cursor and pressing Enter, or by pressing the letter corresponding to the leading letter.

System Info looks at your machine, and details the type of machine, the BIOS date, RAM size, DOS version, co-processor if any, number of parallel and serial ports, number of logical drives and the type of video adapter. Map of Progs details the active programs on the system, their starting address and the amount of memory used. Printer Status merely shows if the printer is available or not. RAM Status shows the total amount of RAM, the amount used and the amount available. Time Set and New Date reset the DOS clock for the remainder of the session but would not usually reset the hardware clock. Colors resets foreground and background colours and intensities to suit your eyes and monitor.

Options

The options menu allows the person setting up a menu system to control just how much access a user has to various functions. Users can be allowed or denied Menu Editing, Menu Moving, Setting of Time, Setting of Date, Clear on Exit, Utilities Menu, Window to DOS, Exit to DOS and Disk Manager. It also allows beeping to be turned on or off, the screen-blanking time to be set, and for creation of passwords and specification of an editor program.

Disk manager

The Disk Manager displays a list of files in the root directory and a list of the next level down of sub-directories. These can be sorted at the touch of a key by Name, Extension, Date/Time or Size. Files can be Erased, Renamed, Copied, Moved and Hidden/Shown. Directories can be Opened by highlighting their name and then selecting Open, whereupon the files in them are listed. Directories can also be Closed, Erased, Made and Renamed. Alternative drives can be selected, files can be run, and the DOS command line accessed.

Of all the features of PowerMenu, Disk Manager proved the least useful. Mainly this was because the intensities chosen often made menu bars disappear on my mono screen. In addition, running my editor from Disk Manager proved to be impossible.

Documentation

There were 27 pages of documentation on the disk, enough to validly evaluate the program, and enough to encourage registration to get the full printed manual. Registration is \$US89.95 plus \$US5 Shipping, for which you get the latest version of PowerMenu and a printed and bound Users' Manual. For \$US49.95 plus \$US5 shipping, you receive the latest Users' Manual, while \$US29.95 allows you to continue to use the copy of the program currently in your possession. The shipping costs quoted are for the US, and a little more should be sent to allow for international postage.

PowerMenu is a product of Brown Bag Software, File #41719, PO Box 60000, San Francisco, CA 94160 USA. I note from the opening copyright screen when starting up PowerMenu that they accept Visa, MasterCharge and American Express when users register. Now you have no excuse for not registering! Get an evaluation copy of PowerMenu from the *Your Computer* Bulletin Board, or buy one direct from Brown Bag. I am sure that you too will soon find that you run your system with a power menu! □

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YOUR APPLE

The sound of one Apple clapping . . .

It might seem serene on the surface, but the optical disk business is duck-like in its efforts – there's a lot of people paddling like mad below the surface. I am now convinced, more than ever, that the CD-ROM format is going to be as important to our computing future as was the invention of the floppy disk in its day.

Apple released its CD-ROM for the Apple GS and the Mac at Microsoft's annual compact disk conference in Seattle, and from all reports it's a bottler. If you are thinking of investing in CD-Audio for your hi-fi, give it a miss for a couple of months, and await the Apple product. It won't be cheap (over \$2000 is one banded figure) but it could be worth the cost – because Apple, it seems, is widening its field of interest much further in the audio market.

Apple has done a first, again (I think) by producing this dual player – but it seems to be placing a rather costly premium on its innovation. I don't know anyone else putting out a dual audio/ROM compact disk player, although it surprises me that Apple hasn't emphasised this point (if it's true) in its press release. Maybe Apple has an agreement with Sony and Philips to play down this aspect. I'm just guessing.

In the press release on the CD-ROM unit, you've got to wade through the first three and a half pages of hackneyed PR guff to find the revealing throw-away line – 'It also features an audio chip set and *desk accessory* software that let it play audio CD tracks on CD-ROM as well as commercial audio compact disks.' I did a double-take and had to re-read this three times before the message sunk in.

That's all Apple say. Apparently the desk accessory it is talking about is a program that comes with the unit to allow your computer to access the disk via the SCSI port. If you haven't got SCSI, you'll need it now.

MIDI

Apart from the obvious advantages of only having one expensive CD unit in your home instead of two, there's also the point that with the new \$100 MIDI interface and the excellent sound chips in the Apple IIGS and Mac, the Apple product tree is sending out an exploratory branch into the world of the professional musician and audio-recordist.

MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Inter-

face) has been around for quite a few years now, but just recently its taken off seriously. MIDI was first announced back in 1983 after a joint effort by electronic instrument manufacturers around the world. They realised that there was a need to link together the various new electronic music recorders, samplers and synthesisers that were taking over the music industry.

As you would expect, MIDI information is simply a specially formatted data stream which can be generated by any standardised instrument or recorder. For instance a MIDI format electric guitar can feed its data stream into a MIDI synthesiser, and if the guitar is specially equipped with MIDI controls, it can manipulate and reshape the sound produced by the circuits of the synthesiser. The output can be a combination of sounds that you can't get from a single instrument.

Computers and Music

IF YOU WOULD like to know more about how MIDI works, see Andrew Symaniz' series 'Microcomputers, MIDI and Music.' In this issue he continues his discussion on MIDI channel messages. Back issues are available for previous articles in the series; refer to the Services page for information on obtaining copies.

On the technical side, MIDI uses quite simple serial hardware and software protocols. The hardware standard is very flexible by being limited only to specifying such things as the type of shielded three-wire cable to be used (5-pin DIN connectors at both ends), and the basic outline design of a circuit needed to handle MIDI format data at 31.25 kilobits per second.

At the software protocol level, MIDI specifies three types of data handling. There are standard codes that turn notes on and off and specify relative audio volume; optional codes for controlling modulation, pitch changes and vibrato; and system exclusive codes which are unique to each instrument/synthesiser and which are used to programming it.

Data travels along a single MIDI cable in only one direction but they use a 4-bit channel identifier which can address 16 different instruments, or groups of instruments.

Both the GS and Mac need a data path to transfer data between the computer and the MIDI instrument. This link has to

have a high-speed serial-to-parallel interface and voltage-conversion circuitry.

Once you've got the MIDI link and the right software, your Apple can become the equivalent of a very expensive studio multitrack recorder. You can record a sequence of notes and these controls will be recorded in the computer memory by a 'sequencer' program. Switch the program to 'play', and the instrument comes under the computer control and replays the notes as recorded. You can also sample musical sounds and store them digitally to be replayed by a synthesiser.

Once inside the computer, the data can be massaged in any way you want. It can also be linked together with other recorded data streams to create multiple tracks which play simultaneously. In fact, you can perform an infinite number of digital overdubs without degrading the sound one iota. This is where this system is superior to even the best analog multi-track recording where every overdub results in a devaluation of the audio quality to some degree.

Tempo

Musicians also appreciate the fact that with MIDI you can manipulate the tempo of prerecorded music at any time without that chipmunk effect that you get on tape recorders if you try to speed them up. If a musician is facing a difficult part of a recording, he or she can handle it at slow-speed or in the key that they find best, then speed it up later and swap it to a different key.

After you've made a recording, a MIDI data transcription program can analyse everything and set it out in standard musical notation, ready for printing out on paper. Transcription programs aren't perfect yet, but they give you one hell of a start towards transferring your composition to paper.

And with the high quality of graphics on both the Mac and the GS, comes the ability to manipulate sounds (both music and sound effects) by using screen-based graphical sound profiles rather than a series of numbers.

Reshaping sounds that have previously been sampled is likely to become the way of the future for music recording – and at the same time the process will open up a Pandora's box of problems for lawyers trying to impose copyright restrictions. When does a reshaped sound cease to be a copy, and exist in its own right? □

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NEW

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NEW

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NEW

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YOUR IBM

A plethora of riches this month! First is Version 3 of the NetComm communications program, also available in a generic form from CyberSoft. Second is Athena BIOS, a hardware/software solution that allows almost any CGA software, including self-booting games, to run on systems with Hercules video boards.

The NetComm Program V3

Australia presents a unique challenge for authors of communications programs. Viatel is widely used, as is an equivalent in the UK, but not in the USA. At the same time the bulletin board scene is very active, and along with business communications, needs high speed communications across half the world via satellite links. This requires very efficient error correcting protocols like Zmodem so that high speed modems are not hobbled waiting for the next packet to be transmitted, as can happen with the ubiquitous Xmodem.

The NetComm Program V3 offers Viatel and general purpose communications at speeds up to 19,200 baud, depending on the computer used. It has several popular error correcting protocols, including Xmodem, Ymodem, Zmodem and Sealink, while ASCII transfers are also supported.

Other features are a chat mode, with separate windows on the screen for transmitted and received text, a learn mode which can watch a log-in, record it, and then automate subsequent calls to the same host, a WordStar compatible editor and a powerful script language. Support is included for the Microsoft Mouse, and my Mouse Systems Mouse worked well when using a driver to emulate the Microsoft Mouse. Video cards supported include MDA, CGA, EGA, VGA and Hercules.

A NetComm session

The NetComm Program can be run on a two floppy disk system, but a hard disk system is preferred. Copy the files to the hard disk, and run the main program NETCOMM.EXE. A setup routine is run automatically if NETCOMM.EXE has not previously been run. Now the main off-line screen appears. A status bar is at the bottom and the titles of several menus at the top. The status bar shows OFFLINE or ONLINE at the left, and the time of day at the right. Selection of a menu can be made by cursor keys or mouse to move the cursor, or by pressing the highlighted letter in a menu or option name. The menus initially

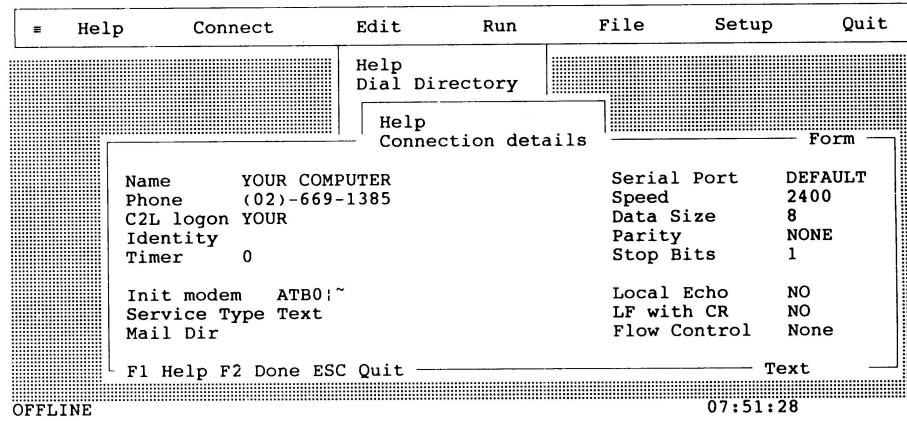


Figure 1. From the Edit menu in Version 3 of the NetComm Program, the user can alter the dial directory, edit a file, a script program, modem and connection details.

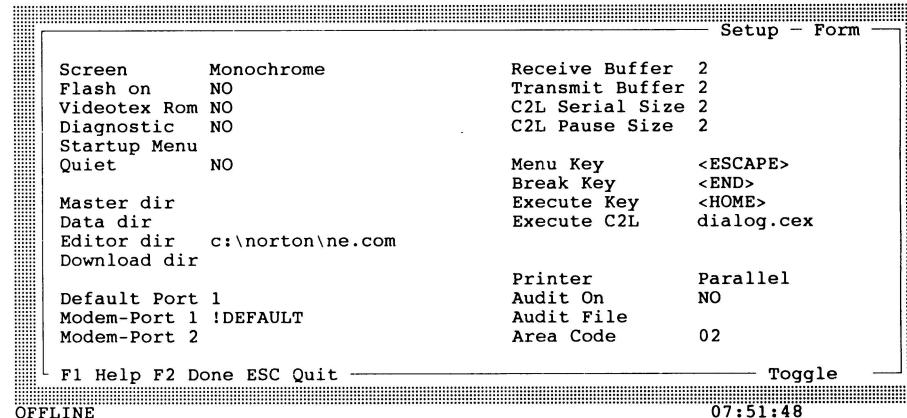


Figure 2. The Setup screen allows most of the program's default parameters to be reset.

available include Help, Connect, Edit, Run, File, Setup and Quit.

Connect is used to dial a host or connect to a local computer with a direct cable to the one in use. It has a range of second level options including Help, Call, Answer, Pickup and Local. Call is used to initiate a call, Answer to set up the system to answer incoming calls, Pickup to allow users who are talking to each other to go from voice to data, and Local connects to another computer with a direct cable link.

From the Edit menu one can alter the dial directory, edit a file, a script program, modem and connection details and so on. Run can execute any program external to the NetComm Program, and can execute internal script language programs. The

File options are extensive, so I won't list them here. The Setup menu allows most of the program's default parameters to be reset. The user can specify Jump Keys to bypass the menu system and speed up common tasks, though in general the program is fast and easy to use via the menus.

Calling a host

Calling a Viatel host or a Bulletin Board is easy. From the Offline screen, pressing C pops down a Connect menu. Pressing C again shows a list of the five hosts that the user has nominated as the most frequently called. One of these can be selected either by pressing a numeric key from 1 to 5, or by moving a cursor bar and

pressing Enter, while pressing F2 displays all other entries in the dialling directory. At all times context sensitive help is available by pressing F1, and the actions the user could take are listed across the bottom of the window. The program will automatically redial if connection is not made, but only for five attempts in accordance with Telecom regulations.

At this point I should digress and note that at any time the user can tell the NetComm Program to watch a session as the user logs onto a host, read the prompts coming down and the user's responses, and store the details in a file. The next time this host is called, log-on is automatic. The learn mode is entered by running the program LEARN.CEX from the R)un C)2L menu selections.

After calling a host, connecting, and automatically logging-in if desired, the screen goes to on-line mode. The screen appears similar to the off-line screen, but there are some subtle differences. The status bar now shows the word ONLINE at the left side instead of OFFLINE, and the time display at the right shows the time elapsed for the call, and not the time of day. The menu options have disappeared from the top of the screen and, of course, the user's keystrokes are sent to the serial port and not acted on by the program. Pressing the Escape key pops a list of possible menus across the top of the screen. These are Help, Options, Edit, Run, File, Setup and Quit, all much the same as the possibilities in the off-line menu, though the Call menu has been replaced with the Options menu.

From the Options menu the user can Disconnect, Redial, Capture Text, Print Text, Get (receive) File, Upload (send) File, split the screen for Chat Windows or more. Pressing Escape at almost any time takes the user back up the menu system by one level, and in on-line mode can toggle from the highest menu to terminal mode.

The combination of Viatel, Zmodem and the ability to learn a log-in sequence have weaned me from the various communications programs I previously used. The NetComm Program V3 is a great program, and is an infinite improvement over the previous version. My only reservation relates to the manual. While most attractive in appearance inside and out, it appears to have been written by a technical person deeply involved in the development of the program, and can be rather opaque to others less fortunate. Fortunately, after initial setup the manual is redundant and the program just becomes

one of the most powerful, useful and satisfying communications programs I have ever used.

The NetComm Program is bundled with current NetComm modems, but can also be purchased separately, and upgrades are available for existing users of older versions of the program. It comes with details of the configuration of a large range of NetComm modems. The generic version of the program, sold under the Gateway banner by CyberSoft, has configuration details for many modems from other manufacturers.

Registered users of previous versions can update for \$57 (you must return your Version 2 disk as proof of ownership), while the recommended retail price for outright purchase is a mere \$114; these prices are taxed but do not include shipping. The NetComm program comes bundled with the Trailblazer Mark II, all Smart-Modems, all In-modems and the Premium Pocket Modem 123. If you bought a new modem after 20 March, you can get a free upgrade to Version 3 if you produce an invoice and return the Version 2 disk. Contact NetComm on (02) 888-5533.

Athena BIOS

Most PCs being bought for use in the home have either a CGA video board, driving a colour or low resolution video monitor, or a Hercules compatible video board driving a higher resolution monochrome monitor. Both can display graphics, but graphics programs written for just one will not run on the other. While many business programs can display graphics on both, most games and many low end graphics programs are written solely for the CGA. They will show text (if any) on a Hercules screen, but not graphics. Some Public Domain and user-supported programs like SIMCGA allow many programs which expect CGA to run on Hercules, but a significant number of programs still won't run. Worst affected are games which are not run from the DOS prompt but require the machine to be rebooted, using the games disk instead of a boot disk.

Athena Digital has attacked this problem in two ways, hardware and software, both packaged together as the Athena BIOS. It has a software solution which allows the vast majority of programs written for CGA to be run on a Hercules. It also has a tiny expansion board, as long as an expansion slot and only about 3 cm wide, carrying just four chips.

The Athena BIOS can be run two ways.

For normal programs, the file ATHENA.SYS is copied to your boot disk and a line is added to your CONFIG.SYS file, containing DEVICE=ATHENA.SYS. This loads the Athena device driver. Initially the CGA emulation is inactive, and a program called ATHENA.COM is used to control it. The command ATHENA /E at the DOS prompt invokes CGA emulation on a Hercules board, and with other parameters ATHENA.COM can disable the emulation and can do other video related tasks.

The combination of Viatel, Zmodem, and the ability to learn a log-in sequence have weaned me from the various communications programs I previously used. The NetComm Program V3 is a great program, and is an infinite improvement over the previous version.

To run a self-booting game (such as Kings Quest) the PC is rebooted using a copy of the ATHENA distribution disk made with DISKCOPY. This loads its own code without DOS, checks the hardware, and then invites the user to insert the self-booting disk and press any key to continue. The self booting disk then loads and runs.

Athena BIOS was very successful with a range of games and other software on my PC. I did not find any CGA specific software that I could not run, but as Athena only claims that 95 per cent of CGA software can be run on Hercules under its system there must be some that doesn't.

My review copy came from VapourWare; (02) 632 8841. At \$99 taxed it is almost essential for anyone with a PC with Hercules video. □

YOUR ATARI

Atari's Mega ST

The June 1986 Australian release of the Atari ST series of computers literally changed the face of home computing in this country. No longer were we restricted to a meager 64 kilobytes of memory or a measly 16 colours. Never again would we have to put up with a word processor that showed only 40 columns (half a page of standard text). The world of WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) was suddenly opened up to the home user and overnight the home computer was technologically ahead of the venerable IBM and its clones.

The 520ST gave its owner 512 Kbyte RAM, 360K disk storage, 512 colours and a 68000 processor running at 8 MHz. Included also was a MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) port to satisfy those so inclined. Atari 1040 owners were rewarded with extra RAM (1024 Kbyte) and a double-sided 720 Kbyte disk drive as standard.

Surely we had reached the paragon of home computer power. Why, even small business was showing a definite interest and professional writers had finally found an affordable, easy to use machine to replace their antiquated typewriters; everyone was happy. Or were they? As the power of the ST was exploited it became apparent that even 1 Mbyte of RAM was not enough for memory-hungry applications such as Cad and desktop publishing (DTP). Atari had followed the market and early this year announced the worldwide release of its new ST models: the Mega ST range.

There are two models of Mega ST: the Mega 2 and the Mega 4. Externally they are identical with the CPU designed to sit under the monitor, thus presenting a smaller footprint and maximising valuable desk space. The CPU casing also houses the one 720 Kbyte, 3½ inch double sided disk drive. On the rear panel you will find the usual ST connectors including the Reset button, On/Off switch, RS232C port (for modem or serial printer) with a DB25 male connector, standard IBM parallel printer port, power socket, monitor socket for either colour or monochrome Atari monitor, floppy disk port for external drive, DMA port for connection of a hard disk unit or laser printer, MIDI In and MIDI Out ports for synthesizer or musical instrument connection.

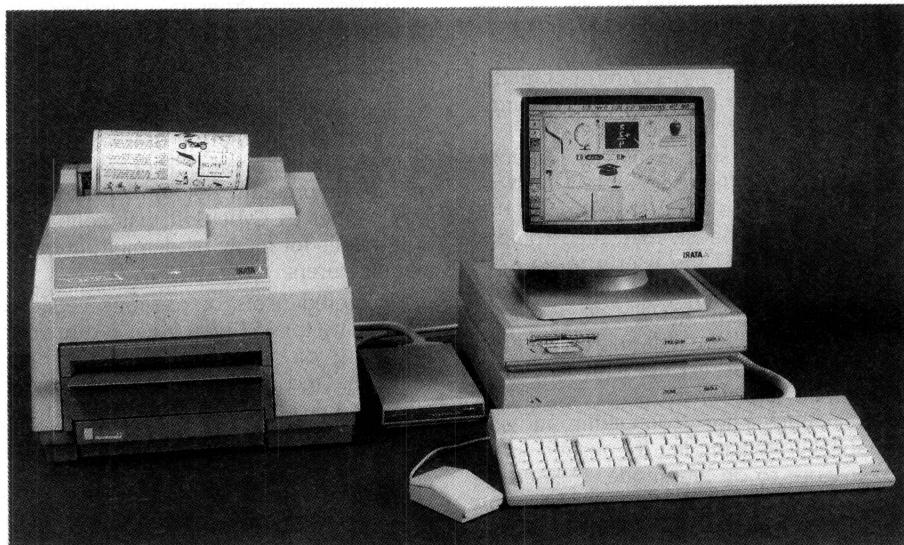


Figure 1. The two models of the Mega ST, the Mega 2 and Mega 4, both feature a DMA port for connection of a hard disk unit or laser printer.

Cooling fan

An interesting feature of the Mega ST is the cooling fan mounted beside the reset switch. Whilst the 520 or 1040ST have never encountered overheating problems, the Mega, with more available internal space, has obviously been designed with future internal hardware add-ons in mind. Extra circuit boards may mean more heat build up and the inclusion of a fan is a sensible move by Atari. The notion of hardware add-ons is supported by the presence of a removable panel on the rear of the CPU. This panel is in line with an expansion board connector inside the computer and it is through this opening that a cable will pass to connect to other peripheral devices. This leaves the way clear for third party manufacturers to produce many new products for the machine (networking and so on).

The Mega ST's keyboard is separate and attaches to the CPU via a cable with a small US four wire telephone jack at the end. Although the cable is long enough for most situations, it may be possible to extend it using one of the new modular phone extenders available from most electrical components stores.

The keyboard has a positive feel and is a great improvement over the type fitted to the previous ST models. The actual keyboard layout has not been changed. How-

ever, the Mega keyboard being detached has allowed Atari to include several enhancements not possible before. Small adjustable supports allow the user to set the keyboard at the most comfortable angle and will be appreciated by all who use the machine. Mouse and joystick ports are located at the rear of the keyboard and are much easier to reach than those on the older STFM. The location of the mouse port also makes life a little more convenient for the left hander.

Internally, the main difference between the two Mega STs is memory capacity. The Mega 2 has 2 Mbyte of RAM whilst the Mega 4 has a whopping 4 Mbyte available to the user. At the time of writing, only the Mega 4 is being fitted with the much heralded Blitter or Graphics Accelerator Chip, although purchasers of the Mega 2 will have upgrades made available to them shortly.

The Blitter offers users dramatically improved graphics performance. This will be most noticeable in the increased speed that will accompany your normally slow Cad packages. Most graphics programs will be able to take advantage of the Blitter's capabilities, however should you have any problem with a particular package, it is simply a matter of calling on the Options menu from your desktop and

switching the Blitter off. This will return the computer to its normal unblittered speed. Bear in mind that the Blitter only speeds up graphics, it has no effect on the actual processing speed of the machine.

Both machines use the familiar GEM operating environment and, as such, are compatible with existing ST software. This assures the prospective Mega ST owner of access to a vast range of programs. Music applications, DTP, spreadsheets, databases, Cad, games and much, much more are available for these new machines *now*.

Many of the excellent packages available will readily take advantage of the extra RAM, allowing much larger and more complex documents to be produced. Where, with the 1040ST you could hold tens of pages in memory, the Mega ST will hold hundreds. Those with a musical inclination will have more than enough memory for their needs and will be able to take Steinburg Pro 24 to its limits. Publishing Partner becomes a joy to use and the future holds prospects of Ventura Publisher (currently for IBM) becoming available for the Mega ST. Business interests will see larger spreadsheets, more in-depth accounting packages and larger databases. With the huge memory of these new Atari computers and the blinding speed of the 68000 processor, we will soon see many new business packages available that will take advantage of the vast computing power of the Mega.

The graphic artist and video effects specialist will also benefit from the increased animation possibilities offered by the combination of memory and Blitter capabilities. This may be the point where we begin to see the Atari enter the field of advertising, or become an important instrument in video production. Real estate, too, may soon accept the Mega as an economical means to control rent rolls or property and client listings.

Operating system

The Mega, 520 and 1040STs are now fitted with a new version of TOS-on-ROM (The Operating System) which includes many improvements over older versions. File copying and disk backup are much faster and continuous scrolling of windows is possible from the desktop. These improvements, however, have caused a small incompatibility with programs which make illegal calls to the operating system or use certain disk copy protection techniques. This is not the fault of the machine, rather proof that sloppy programming has its price. Atari has always stated that programmers should not sidestep



Figure 2. The 520ST has 512 Kbyte RAM, 360 Kbyte disk storage, 512 colours, a 68000 processor running at 8 MHz and a MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) port.

certain system procedures as some parts of TOS may be subject to change. It should be pointed out that literally hundreds of programs have been tested and very few problems actually found. I have not found any commercial packages that won't run on the new machines, although several Public Domain offerings seem to now be incompatible. This is a small price to pay for the vast improvements offered by the new ROMs.

Unfortunately, a machine such as this does have some disappointing drawbacks. By including a disk storage capacity of only 720 Kbyte Atari has limited the usefulness of the Mega in its basic form. In order to make full use of the massive memory it is essential that a hard disk be utilised. At current retail prices this will add \$1295 to the cost of a system. Unlike the 520 or 1040STFM, the Mega does not have an RF modulator; whilst it is unlikely that business users would use a TV as a visual display unit, it does limit the machine somewhat for home use.

The lack of a modulator also precludes the user from easily taking a composite video and audio signal (a simple cabling job) from the machine to a device such as a video recorder. This will be seen as a major stumbling block by businesses that wish to record the computer's output via video for future showing (for example, sales presentations, real estate listing with accompanying digitised picture, for viewing in a client's home and so on).

It would certainly make good sense for Atari to include composite video and audio output as standard equipment. Yet another problem is encountered when the

user, due to limited space, places the keyboard directly in front of the CPU. The keyboard now blocks access to the disk drive and makes the task of switching disks extremely difficult, if not impossible. Those with a hard disk drive will not encounter this problem as the CPU can be 'stacked' on top of the drive unit, both cases being of the same dimensions.

On the positive side, with the release of its Mega STs, Atari has taken a giant step forward and will no doubt reap the rewards as more and more individuals and businesses take advantage of the 'power without the price' marketing strategy. Atari has obviously aimed its new machines at the business market. By separating its games and business interests, Atari hopes to lose the 'toyshop' image it created with the release of its earlier 8-bit machines. With the powerful multi-mega-byte computers it hopes to woo businesses who for far too long have been forced to use the outdated, expensive technology offered by the major computer companies.

With a recommended retail price of \$2495 for the Mega 2 and \$3495 for the Mega 4, Atari is really living up to its motto. It should be noted that the price quoted for both machines does not include a monitor. The Atari monochrome monitor has a RRP of \$345 while the colour monitor has a RRP of \$595. Have a talk to your local Atari dealer; I'm sure you'll come out smiling. All prices quoted are taxed and applicable from 1 August – so quick!

The test machine was supplied by Atari Corporation Australia; (02) 805 0344. □

YOUR AMIGA

Strength to strength . . .

All those people who, twelve months ago, were outspoken in doubting the future of the Amiga must by now be eating their words. Far from dying, this remarkable machine has gone on from strength to strength.

Sales of the Amiga 500 have far exceeded Commodore's most optimistic forecasts and sales of the Amiga 2000, though slow at first, have climbed dramatically.

What can explain such sales success? Certainly it's not any sort of dynamic marketing by Commodore. When was the last time you saw an Amiga commercial on TV or in the popular press? I can't remember any comparable consumer item which was treated with such disdain by its own manufacturer.

Reading through the 'Letters to the Editor' columns of computer magazines such as *Amiga World* and *Amazing Computing* serves only to convince me that Commodore almost goes out of its way to be unhelpful and apparently uncaring in their attitude toward owners or potential owners of Amigas.

So what has caused this neglected waif of a machine to become the success it is? In my opinion there are several factors which, together, have caused the Amiga to succeed where other machines have failed.

First and foremost, credit must go to those Amiga pioneers such as Dale Luck, Carolyn Scheppner and others who created magic software to bring the machine to life. And, also to Fred Fish, whose work in collecting and distributing Public Domain and Shareware software enabled struggling Amiga owners to keep abreast of the rapid developments; and to Leo Schwab and all the other stalwarts who have contributed utilities and entertaining nonsense graphics, animations and examples goes much of the credit.

Pioneering Amiga software companies such as Aegis, Electronic Arts, New Tek, Lattice and many others made enormous contributions to the success of the Amiga. The Interchange File Format (IFF) 'standards' developed by Electronic Arts are among the most significant software standards developed for any microcomputer.

Above all else, the tremendous enthusiasm of early Amiga owners who supported and promoted the machine during

the 'bad times' of software shortage made the Amiga a success. I have owned several other micros but with none of them have I experienced the same comradeship that I have found among Amiga owners. Perhaps Commodore's lack of support has forced the close contact and willingness to share ideas and assistance.

Three dimensional graphics and animation packages like Sculpt 3D, Animate 3D, VideoScape 3D, Silver and others are light years from the 'originals' like Graphicraft. Games like Ferrari Formula 1, Dark Castle and Time Bandit have brought true arcade speed and imagery to the Amiga. Jet has followed on from Flight Simulator for those of us who feel 'the need for speed . . . '.

So what has caused this neglected waif of a machine to become the success it is?

Yes, the Amiga has really come of age. The list of software titles available in Australia runs for many pages and covers every conceivable function, from spreadsheets to speedway games, from word-processors to graphics. I think it is fair to say that there is software available for every imaginable purpose, (almost!).

One theme which appears not to be covered is genealogy, right Ailsa? I have been asked by several people to recommend a genealogy package for the Amiga, but I don't know of one. If anyone out there has written, or would care to write, such a package I'll be pleased to give it a mention. In this bicentennial year it might even qualify as a bicentennial project and attract a megabuck grant - who knows.

New software

A couple of new packages to mention this month. First up is Kind Words, a new and very pretty word processor for Amiga users who want more than a toy word processing package but can't afford the big bucks for WordPerfect.

Nice and easy to learn and use, able to incorporate IFF images with text wrap-

around, possessing a very useful set of fonts and printer drivers, this is really a very polished product. I don't believe that it has the same brute force ability as WordPerfect but it is still a nice package to use.

Kind Words works best with two floppy disk drives (even better with a hard disk if you have one), but is quite acceptable with a single drive system. It's well worth a look if you're in the market for a medium-priced word processor.

Second in line this month is PIXmate, an image enhancement package from Progressive Peripherals and Software in the glorious US of A. Billed as a 'total image processing system', PIXmate contains a stunning array of image modification facilities. I feel as though I've been waiting years for a package like this.

I frequently digitise images from books, maps, magazines and so on; I've often been frustrated by the lack of contrast or the colour balance or some other aspect of the digitised image. Now with PIXmate I don't have to put up with second rate images. If I'm not happy with the contrast I can change it. Colours can be changed individually, or the colour balance of the whole image can be changed with a single mouse movement.

The facilities that PIXmate offers were used by NASA to improve the planetary images returned from deep-space craft. The list of functions goes on and on: contrast, saturation, intensity, red, green and blue balance, colour merge, format conversions, colour matching, colour negative, bitplane rotation, and on and on . . .

PIXmate uses the Amiga's 'halfbrite' mode which permits up to 64 colours on screen at a time. This facility doesn't work with some of the very early Amigas sold in the USA, but I believe that all Amigas sold in Australia will be quite OK. PIXmate can also use all the other Amiga modes such as lo-res, med-res, interlace, hi-res and HAM and can handle overscan and PAL.

What more can I say, this is a great package - an absolute must for anyone involved with images on the Amiga (isn't that all of us?). At about \$99 it won't break the bank either. PIXmate is not copy protected so it's easy to back-up and to install on your utility or hard disks. Let's hope the software thieves give this one a break. It's a darned good package at a fair price so if it's worth using, it's worth buying. Cheers for now. □



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Soon after establishment, it was apparent that there was a real demand by commercial and corporate clients for serviced IBM compatible equipment. Five years of involvement with some of Australia's largest companies, government departments and public institutions has seen Atlantis grow to become one of the countries biggest wholly Australian owned micro computer specialists.

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A never ending story?

Back in the 16th century, prevailing opinion had it that the earth was the centre of the universe. When an upstart astronomer named Galileo stated the outrageous notion that the earth in fact revolved about the sun, he was forced by the powers that be to renounce his words. Legend has it that when he recanted he whispered under his breath 'Nevertheless, it still moves'. Today you can say the same thing about the C64.

Because the C64 is still moving. Despite the prevailing opinion that 8-bit computers are dead, it continues to sell strongly even though it is now six years old. That in itself is remarkable, but even more so when you realise that this computer, (apart from one cosmetic facelift), is exactly identical to its original 1982 form. It's a phenomenon unparalleled by any other computer make or model, and it's one that can't be ignored. A track record of such continuous success contains lessons for all of us, not just pundits, so just what is it that keeps the C64 going?

Ancient history isn't going to help us here. All of those folklorish tales about Commodore's aggressive pricing or its vertical integration with chip maker MOS technologies may explain some of the 64's initial success, but they don't explain why it still sells in 1988. The real competition the C64 faces today comes from technically much more advanced computers like the Atari and Commodore's own Amiga 500. These machines are only a few hundred dollars more than a C64 plus a 1541 drive so why do people still opt for the 64? The price differential is even smaller when you look at the C128D yet it still sells as well. Why?

C128D – an extended 64?

Commodore had planned to phase out the 64 when they first introduced the C128. Instead, the 64 remained and the 128 was phased out in favour of the 128D. It's easy to see why if you think of the C128 as an extended C64, it caters for people who want true 80 column word processing and more portability (just one box to carry instead of three), but it's essentially used in 64 mode. I'm sure there is the odd user who uses CP/M or 128 native code extensively, but in my analysis, the C128D is effectively a C64 targeted at a particular niche market.

But that just brings us back to the question of the 64. I was pondering this subject

when I came upon a recent issue of *Compute's Gazette*, the US magazine that specialises in CBM products. Two different articles got me thinking. One by Contributing Editor Fred d'Ignazio was a piece on why people like computers. He had done a little survey and had classed people into six types –

- 1) Puzzle solver,
- 2) Organizer,
- 3) Escape artist,
- 4) Teacher,
- 5) Conversationalist, and
- 6) Toy collector.

Puzzle solvers love solving riddles and problems – like how to make this machine do what I want it to? Organisers are people who want to impose order on chaos – obvious database junkies. Escape artists love computer games. Teachers get hooked on the way computers can engage a child's attention. Conversationalists go for telecomputing, modems and so on. Toy collectors – well we all know one of them.

An interesting thing about this list is that it doesn't include any categories which relate to business use. Categories like: Opportunist – people who see computers as a way of making a living (just kidding!). The point is that his sample was taken from C64 users, or 'home' computerists and when you think about it, the C64 fulfills all of those needs. If this is what home computing is about then the C64 is a very good 'home' computer. Now I know that practically every computer can be made to fulfill these functions, but how many of them are actively marketed at a consumer range?

A few years ago, about the time that IBM abandoned the PC jnr., the conventional wisdom became that the notion of a computer in every home was bunkum. More accurately they meant that there was no money in it. But as heretics like Galileo have proven, conventional wisdom is not always true.

This notion of the C64 being a very good home computer doesn't explain away its success in the face of the Amiga 500. The Amiga does everything that the C64 does, it can even passably emulate the C64, and its graphics and computer power are far superior. Isn't it also a good home computer?

That's where the second article in the *Compute's Gazette* came in. It carried a report on the 1988 Consumer Electronics Show (CES). Commodore wasn't repre-

sented there, but CBM software supporters were. What appears to be happening in the States is a revival of the videogame machine. Nintendo, Sega and Atari all have dedicated computer games machines. These use cartridges and retail for less than a C64, but the software houses which support Commodore were there in force with a whole range of cartridge based games. EPYX president, David Morse was quoted as saying 'games can be done better on the 64 than on a Nintendo.'

Of course a computer is always going to be more versatile than any games machine, but what we may be seeing here is the beginning of a whole new market for the 64 and for consumer computers.

Max

In 1982 when Commodore first released the 64 it had plans for another 64-based machine. This was code named Max and was meant to be a strictly games based machine designed for direct competition with the Atari 2600. The videogame market collapsed and Max never saw the light of day. Could it be that six years on, the C64 is taking on the same market that Max was meant for – people who initially are not interested in computers but just want a cheap form of entertainment for the kids? If a few more dollars gets them a real computer as well, why not? It might even help them at school. Certainly this reasoning explains the logic behind the C64 family pack which for an often discounted \$499 gives you half a dozen games, paddles and joysticks and a datasette.

But the thing is, a C64 is perfectly adequate for home computing. If you've purchased a family pack, all you need extra is a disk drive. C64 software is cheaper than for any other computer because of its volume market, and you can do just about everything you'd ever want to do with it – word processing, telecommunications, databases and games games!

None of this is to detract from the Amiga or Atari. In an ironic kind of way I see them as selling to exactly the same sort of people who first bought the 64 six years ago; informed buyers who are prepared to spend more but who also get a kick out of being part of the development curve of a new(er) machine. However, if I'm right, the C64 success story is far from over. And if it continues to introduce new people to the world of computers, then that can only be a good thing. I know I'm in no hurry to part with my C64/128! □

MICROBEE FILE

What now Microbee Systems?

I was surprised to recently receive in the mail, a letter marked 'Important Legal Document - Do Not Discard'. It was from Compumark, a company making a take-over bid for Microbee, an adjunct to the closure of Impact Systems. The company is offering 1.5 cents per share to shareholders (a far cry from the 55 cents per share I forked out just two years ago).

I no longer want to speculate about what will happen. Given the time involved in getting this copy to print (approximately two months) what I may comment on today may be contradicted tomorrow (as was the case with my predictions of a Microbee computer/Impact laser printer desktop publishing set-up back in January this year). All I hope is that Microbee owners will, at the very least, not be disadvantaged. To this end, if there is something you would like to see in this column, to help you and your Microbee (for example, specific reviews, examples of applications and so on) please write to Microbee File, *Your Computer*, PO Box 227, Waterloo 2017 NSW. I feel that there will continue to be support for current Microbee owners by the majority of third party software producers.

Software snippets

In response to a circular I sent out to Microbee software producers I received many and various replies.

Research Technology seems to be doing well from its modest drafting/drawing package, WordGraph A For Drafting, despite not having advertised for quite some time. The package itself has been updated to cater for Premium Microbees and adapted to a variety of printers.

It is a drafting package which is aimed at delivering a hard copy diagram exactly the size and shape it was on the screen. This means you can use a ruler at the screen or use the millimeter read-out provided. It has reportedly been utilised by road and landscape designers for cross-sections and quote diagrams, students and teachers for illustrating technical writing, circuit designers and small engineering firms.

Apparently, a down-turn in sales and piracy have taken their toll on the fair-dinkum adventure program company, Grotnik Software. The author of Grotnik Wars, Bonyip Adventure and others is now offering all its Microbee titles as part of a Share-

ware scheme. You are encouraged to hand out copies of the program to your friends. If they like it, they are encouraged to send whatever renumeration they think reasonable to the author. They are then entitled to any updates, information or list of new titles.

Gee Software closing down

Hard times seem to have hit the smaller software people. A hobbyist concern, Gee Software is looking at closing down its Microbee Software section mainly due to the efforts of pirates and slow sales. Gee Software specialise mostly in educational material, and provided me with a synopsis of five of its programs. It appears that it caters mainly for preschool and primary aged children. If you are interested and need more information, drop a line to Gee Software, PO Box 556, Elizabeth, SA 5112. You may not be too late.

There are those who are still doing their fair share of sales to Microbee owners. These include the utilities oriented Glyptic Software (Write-Hand-Man, Spooler, Mailing label processor and so on), the business based Carpe Office Systems (General Accounting package - invoice, general ledger, payroll), CARE for the primary classroom (Carefile, Spelling Manager, Challenger) and Denham Software catering for the high school scene (Eucalypts, AIDS, Maths packages). Will we see new titles released by these people in the coming six months?

Some hitherto sole Microbee (CP/M) software producers have taken the hint and have diversified into the MS-DOS field. As one producer puts it, his programs have 'grown' from Microbee programs. If you are interested, Software Support Services has Turbobase (Super Bee-Base 3), Cashbook and Mark (all accounting type programs) now in IBM PC compatible format.

Primarily Microbee

If you dread having to collate, scale and redistribute your class's marks, then Primary Teacher's Mark Book, in its updated form, will win you over. It is a simple to use program and, as is expected of all efficient contemporary programs, is menu driven. Accordingly, to run Mark Book, you need a disk based Microbee with at least 64 kilobytes of RAM.

The amount of data it can handle is pretty impressive and, to my mind, exceeds the needs of a large primary school. For example, the maximum number of pupils per class is set at 45. Up to 20 subjects are allowed per class, with a maximum of 20 marks permitted for each subject. The program allows adequate space for names of students, classes and subjects, and provides for whole and half marks and absent pupils.

The program features a number of calculations which are automatic - totalling and conversion to percentages, compen-

LANGUAGE TERM 1 - 4 JARRAH					
Name	100	50	Tot	Sc	Pos
BABA, A	90	44	89	72	1
DUCKLING, U	98	35	89	71	2
WHITTINGTON, D	78	47	83	66	3
BOOTS, PI	87	32	79	61	4
WHITE, S	69	50	79	61	4
BEARD, B	78	34	75	57	6
MAN, G	67	45	75	57	6
THUMB, T	67	44.5	74	56	8
PIPER, P	55	50	70	52	9
BEAUTY, S	67	32	66	48	10

Scaled to an average of 60.0
Standard deviation 7.5

Figure 1. This printout from Primary Teacher's Mark Book shows that by scaling, marks may be redistributed using a different average and standard deviation.

MICROBEE FILE

Name	C1	50	100	100	100	Tot	Pos
MAN, G	4JA	46	75	94	97	89	1
WHITE, S	4JA	40	79	90	98	88	2
DUCKLING, U	4JA	41	89	82	86	85	3
BABA, A	4JA	34	89	67	90	80	4
BOOTS, PI	4JA	41	79	85	75	80	4
EFANT, L	4GU	42	55	97	82	79	6
WEE, P	4GU	30	80	93	73	79	6
GUL, C	4GU	37	71	65	91	75	8
MUE, E	4GU	32	61	82	86	75	9
WHITTINGTON, D	4JA	41	83	65	67	73	10
BIRD, J	4GU	33	67	87	67	73	11
BEARD, B	4JA	29	75	78	67	71	12
BUSS, I	4GU	25	65	67	88	70	13
BEAUTY, S	4JA	44	66	66	67	69	14
DVARK, R	4GU	47	59	65	66	68	15
OTTER, C	4GU	30	60	81	54	64	16
PIPER, P	4JA	35	70	74	45	64	17
THUMB, T	4JA	30	47	54	89	63	18
PARROT, X	4GU	31	51	65	42	54	19

Key to subjects

A: ART B: LANGUAGE C: MATHS D: SPELLING

Figure 2. Grade Co-ordinator's Aid combines results from two classes to give a better view of the grade as a whole.

Name	C1	50	100	100	100	Tot	Pos
BABA, A	4JA	34	89	67	90	80	4
DUCKLING, U	4JA	41	89	82	86	85	3
WHITTINGTON, D	4JA	41	83	65	67	73	10
WEE, P	4GU	30	80	93	73	79	6
BOOTS, PI	4JA	41	79	85	75	80	4
WHITE, S	4JA	40	79	90	98	88	2
BEARD, B	4JA	29	75	78	67	71	12
MAN, G	4JA	46	75	94	97	89	1
GUL, C	4GU	37	71	65	91	75	8
PIPER, P	4JA	35	70	74	45	64	17
BIRD, J	4GU	33	67	87	67	73	11
BEAUTY, S	4JA	44	66	66	67	69	14
BUSS, I	4GU	25	65	67	88	70	13
MUE, E	4GU	32	61	82	86	75	9
OTTER, C	4GU	30	60	81	54	64	16
DVARK, R	4GU	47	59	65	66	68	15
EFANT, L	4GU	42	55	97	82	79	6
PARROT, X	4GU	31	51	65	42	54	19
THUMB, T	4JA	30	47	54	89	63	18

Key to subjects

A: ART B: LANGUAGE C: MATHS D: SPELLING

Figure 3. Print-out according to subject from Grade Co-ordinator's Aid. The above is in order of merit in language.

sation for pupil absences, ranking of totals, sorting of names and saving and retrieval of data. Mark Book even allows quite sophisticated manipulation of the data through weighting, scaling and standardising.

The first time the program is accessed, the user is asked to key in each pupil's name, thus creating a class. The software is intended to be used for one class only, so once you have entered your pupils' names, they will be called up every time the program is used. If the software has been bought for a school, along with its sister program (a Grade Co-ordinator's Aid) then multiple copies of the software may be made for use by other teachers in the school. This should be done at the outset to avoid confusion.

Once the class list is typed in, all of the menu options deal with the members of that class. A quick run through these options demonstrates the depth and versatility of this program. The Display Roll option presents on screen the full class roll, in traditional mark book fashion, for any subject. To the left of the screen is the list of students' names. Adjacent to these are columns for marks for each test, and to the right are three columns calculated by the computer. These are the TOT column (converted to a percentage), the SC column (the converted score if you have scaled the marks) and the POS column (for each student's position in class).

A basic requirement of such programs is to be able to print out the information. The Print Roll function is straightforward, requiring an Epson compatible dot matrix printer to be connected to the system. The first time this option is used, the program will ask for a date or a common heading to be entered (for example, Term 1 or Jarrah 4). Two options are available; the list can be printed in order of merit or in alphabetical order.

To Edit the roll, E is entered at the main menu. This allows you to change both names and marks in your roll. In this mode, the cursor becomes a block, which can be moved around the screen using the arrow keys or the ESDX direction diamond. Once on top of the item to be changed, pressing the Del key erases it, freeing the space and allowing the correct information to be typed in. Many items can be edited at once, if necessary.

As a class completes a new test, a New Column can be created, by pressing N from the main menu. Your new column may be in an already established subject or in a new subject area. The computer will prompt you to choose. You are also given the option of entering the marks in

random order (you type in the first few letters of a pupil's name – great for a stack of unsorted tests) or alphabetical order.

New pupils are simply added to the roll by entering A at the main menu (for Add Pupil). Type in the pupil's name in the same format as you have established. He or she is added to every subject across the board. Similarly, pupils and columns may be removed. The computer will prompt you for the relevant details, and then once confirmed, will delete the specified column or pupil.

For those statistics buffs, the program provides for weighting and scaling. This allows for emphasis to be placed on one test over another, the case of weighting, and marks to be more evenly distributed, in the case of scaling. Through these processes, which to a degree sacrifice accuracy, the program prompts you for all of the information it needs.

If you are considering scaling marks to either space the class out a bit more, or to group their marks closer together, it is possible to see a graphic representation of the raw scores by using the Graph Roll option. The raw scores are graphed on the left of a vertical line which bisects the screen. Each division on the line, represents a range in marks of five percent, with 100 at the top and 0 at the bottom. Horizontal bars extend from the line, representing the marks which fall in each 5 per cent range. If and when marks are scaled, a new scaled graph appears on the right of the vertical line.

At the start of term, it is often necessary to Clear Subjects. Selecting Z puts you into this mode. You are asked whether all subjects are to be cleared, or just specified ones. Note that this operation does not clear the roll of names. This is only possible by deleting the file NAMES.LST.

The operation Grand Totals is the link into Mark Book's sister program a Grade Co-ordinator's Aid. This option retrieves the total marks for each pupil for every subject and creates a roll containing each subject total. At this point subjects may be weighted and scaled. The information may be printed, displayed to screen or saved. If the latter option is chosen, a name for the class will have to be entered at the appropriate prompt. The file created from this 'save' is then manipulated by a Grade Co-ordinator's Aid.

Last, but certainly not least, is the Exit Program option, and not surprisingly, it is activated by the Esc key. The Esc key is very handy with Mark Book, as it can be used to get you out of all sorts of sticky situations – even printing unwanted lists.

The manual which accompanies the

program is easy to follow – it may even be used as a mini tutorial to help you familiarise yourself with the program. A section worthy of note is the Trouble-shooting Guide. It poses common questions and supplies the appropriate answers related to the running of the software. It is in plain English – a real boon for those of us who have had enough of computer jargon.

The program, in all, is a pleasure to use, not a chore. This is most important, considering what you want and what you will get is a tool, not a tangle of computer software that needs to be mastered before used.

In conjunction with Mark Book, I was provided with a 'beta test' version of a Grade Co-ordinator's Aid. Basically, it amalgamates all of the information on the Mark Book disks used by class teachers and allows for across-the-grade comparison of pupils.

As you would imagine it is a piece of software that needs precise input. Teachers of each class have to therefore enter test scores for the same tests, which have to be marked out of a common score. Grade Co-ordinator's Aid would not be able to correctly function given 2A's maths tests were marked out of 50, 2B's out of 35 and 2C's out of 100. Just as there would have to be consensus between teachers for this to work on paper, there is a similar, perhaps more exacting need when the computer is employed. There are, however benefits for this. All of the data comes together and can be printed out in various forms, allowing clear assessment of a whole grade.

The capacity of the program is limited to the following – 200 pupils per grade, 20 subjects per pupil and 10 classes per grade; again, sufficient for all of the primary schools I have encountered. The program uses the same standards set up by Mark Book, employing a similar menu driven style. It appears to be a logical adjunct to Mark Book.

Both Mark Book and Grade Co-ordinator's Aid can be purchased from Nectar Software, 1 Barracks Street, Emu Plains, 2750 for the sum of \$55 to schools. As Grade Co-ordinator's Aid was supplied as a beta test version, it may not be available as yet. Enquiries should be directed to the above address or phone (047) 35 2158.

There are plans to release an MS-DOS versions of this software, but no commitments have been made to date. I hope that this does go ahead, allowing those with IBM PCs and clones to have access to a system that will put their grade books straight. □

SERVICES PAGE

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Style: All items should be typed (or printed) and double-spaced on plain white paper. We will only accept original copies? no photostats. Include your name, address, telephone number and the date on the first page of your manuscript (all manuscript pages should have your surname and page number in the top right-hand corner). Be clear and concise, and keep jargon and adjectives to a minimum. □

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ing Checker (\$30). Xpert Software's Side2/Banner2 (only \$45) for expert sideways (down instead of across) printing of wide ASCII documents, for example: spreadsheets, timetables; also first class banners in several fonts.

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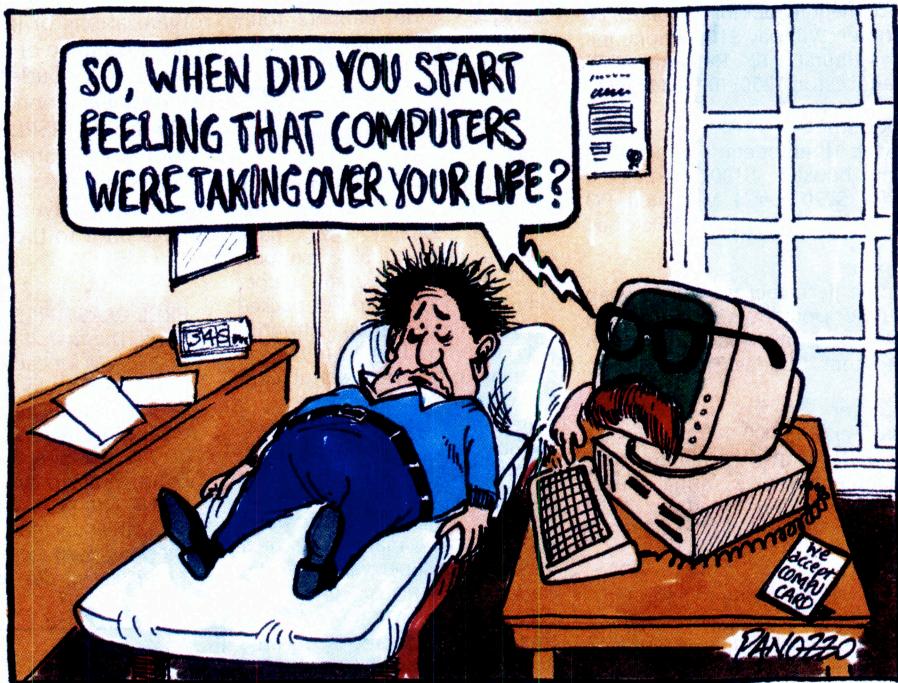
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■ Software companies are facing such stiff claims from buyers in the USA that they have been carrying insurance against it. Apparently, the cost of the premiums has become so great that a special insurance company has been set up just to handle their business. Can't see how that would help – the problem is the number of claims and the fact that their cost outstrips the return from premiums. Most insurance companies try to spread the losses from one area by sharing the risk with other companies and with their other areas of insurance.

■ Computers do things for people who least expect help from them. With smoking in the workplace such an issue today, some people who dislike technology and happen to also be non-smokers are happy to see a computer arrive because they can demand clean air and claim that this will reduce the risk of data corruption as well as lung corruption.

■ At the moment there is rapid progress on silicon solar cells which in the next few years may lead to rooftops covered with cells to provide power for the building below. Once that happens we can expect to see competition for light space. A significant side benefit of this could be computers which run on the office lighting in the same way as many solar-powered calculators.



Bootstrap

For some years now pilots have been trained on simulators and the computer industry has been run on stimulators. The pilots use flight simulators which emulate the real world of planes and give them a chance to fly while still on the ground. The computer industry uses stimulators such as coffee and cocaine. In the USA, the computer industry is so boring, or something, that coffee is not enough. Many of the employees of big and small computer companies use cocaine and the like to get them through the day. This is another form of flight simulation or how to fly while keeping your feet on the ground – at least physically. This column is written on a little coffee and tea and a rare indulgence in computer-induced torpor. The only white powders my local coffee shop sells are aspirin.

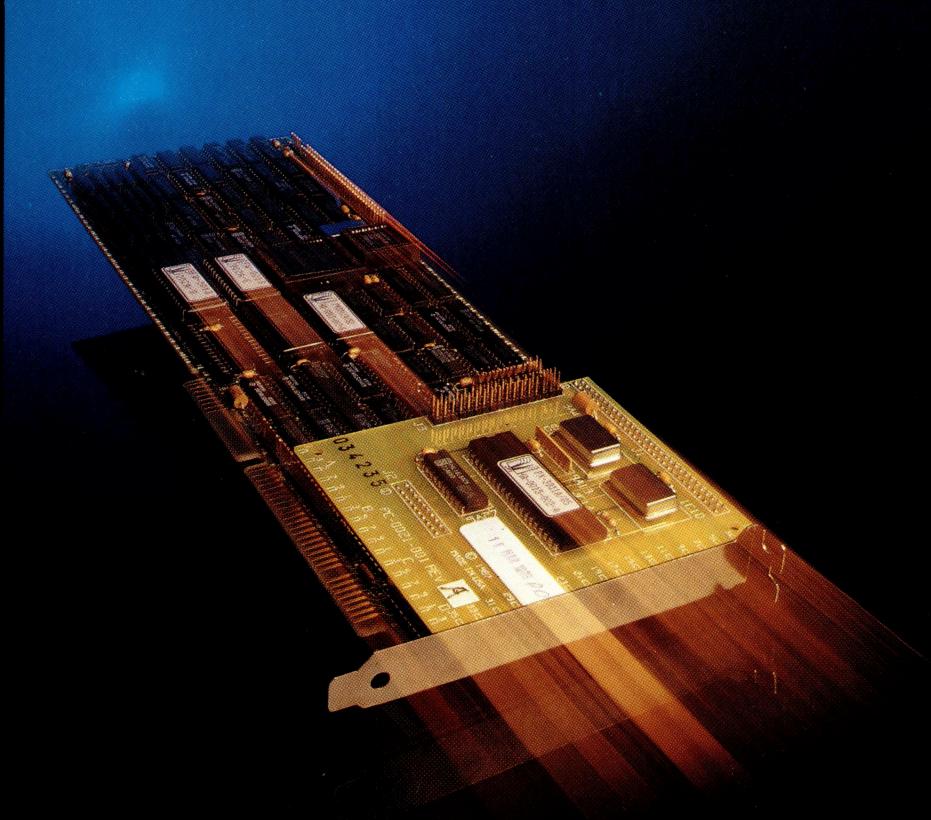
So off the stimulators and back to the simulators: A US company has come out with a new simulator which allows you to practice being a psychiatrist. This is a new twist on Eliza, the famous program which pretends it is a shrink and goes to work on *your* neuroses. The new program is based on an interactive video disk and allows you to counsel a person (an actor) who is apparently depressed. (Possibly about the

cost of psychiatric treatment in the land of the free.)

A Cairns company has taken this idea one step further and produced a program which can deal directly with people with mental problems. And let's face it, who of us doesn't have a few? Otherwise why would you read columns like this one, eh? In a few years, anyone who rings up a counselling service feeling depressed will be connected to a computer. Schizophrenic people will be put onto two computers. Manic depressives will get to talk to a '386-based or 68020-based computer and a cassette-based computer at once, allowing both halves to be handled at appropriate speeds. Perhaps people who are psychopathic could be given a few operating system programmers to beat up, thus restoring the sanity of the rest of us who would otherwise have to vent our frustrations on those same programmers. More difficult cases such as people suffering from sanity will still be handled by humans. The system is to be marketed as Lifeline-Online, and it's coming to a phone booth near you soon. □

Michael Burlace is a consultant and trainer with The Clear Group. He may be contacted on (02) 317 5190 or by writing to PO Box 57, Broadway 2007 NSW.

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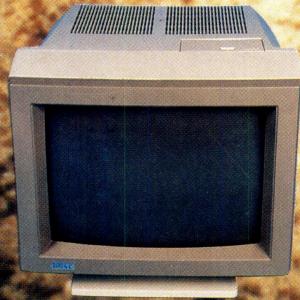
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